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# Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

*A Propaedeutic*

Thomas Sören Hoffmann  
Translated by David Healan

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

# Critical Studies in German Idealism

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Hegel

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Frontispiece: Engraving of Hegel by Friedrich Wilhelm Bollinger (1777–1825) from a lost painting by Christian Xeller (1784–1872); source: Hegel-Archiv, Bochum, Germany; photo: T.S. Hoffmann.

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## Foreword to the Second Edition

This propaedeutic to Hegel has been favourably received by the reviewers and by many readers, whose responses I gratefully acknowledge. A view common to many reader communications is that an introduction to Hegel's philosophy which lets Hegel himself speak in his own words rather than filling its pages with clever academic constructions and weighty opinions has long been sorely missed. It should explain Hegel to readers who already have their own philosophical commitments, that is who are not themselves "Hegelians", addressing their questions and reservations head on. If this book has managed not only to discuss Hegel but to give his thought a new relevance for the present, then it has served its purpose—and it certainly has no other purpose in the second edition. We need to update Hegel continually and especially now when his image is rather faded, if not completely distorted. There is, for instance, the strong tendency in recent secondary literature to project Hegel down to the level of the philosophy of the understanding, which cannot do justice to him, and to have him answer there very small questions, which are naturally not his own. Moreover, prejudices against Hegel and his "system" go completely unquestioned in such literature, even though only a very elementary philosophical education is required to remove them, or at least a readiness to admit to oneself the relative narrowness of one's standpoint (e.g. naturalist, subjectivist, pragmatic) in order to overcome them. This book is happy to invite readers—in the spirit of Hegel's *Phenomenology*—to bring their standpoints (as much as possible) into motion and let them unfold new and broader perspectives—that is to take up the challenge to become 'more dialectical' and to gain in content and intensity.

The new edition has made moderate improvements possible. The literature lists have been extended to bring them up to date and some of the accounts of particular topics were expanded where they were particularly brief in the first edition. Extensive revisions, however, have not been undertaken, for that—for instance a more detailed account of the plan of Hegel's *Logic*—would have undermined the whole format of the book as a propaedeutic. My gratitude goes to all who have contributed to improving the book for this second edition; any remaining lapses are solely the responsibility of the author.

*Thomas Sören Hoffmann*  
Hagen, spring 2012

## Foreword to the First Edition

This book is about a thinker who, like hardly any other, stands for philosophy in the grand style. The big words fall neatly from Hegel's pen as if self-evident and everything is grouped around them. Freedom and reason, spirit and history, the absolute and absolute knowing—words that, along with the claim to a comprehensive system, establish Hegel as a philosophical maximalist, who refuses to be satisfied with anything less than a philosophical standpoint open to everything that can be in any way incorporated. Whoever seeks to understand Hegel will not get far without at least attempting to practice philosophy as the most ambitious enterprise of the human spirit.

Hegel's desire to bind philosophy to its greatest possible form, to pursue it as the science of totality, as the system usurping everything is by no means the only, and not necessarily the main, reason why it provokes so much controversy and conflict—the times for philosophical maximalism and the optimism of reason, of the 'closed system', seem to be irretrievably *passé*. Philosophy in the grand style has been pushed aside in favour of more modest formats like scepticism and the sensible management of thinking processes sensibly restricted in their range. Under these circumstances Hegel's philosophy, which can no more be broken down into bite-sized chunks than it can be transformed into arbitrary thought formats, constitutes, even in its diminished presence, a continuing provocation. Curiously enough, such provocation is exactly in line with the heart and soul of this philosophy's self-unfolding of its own standpoint, with its claim to universality couched in terms of an offensive critique of the small formats of thinking. For those big words appear in Hegel's writings as *results* of the critique of the categorial cut of less well-defined, supposedly natural intuitions and assumptions. Hegel's results draw their evidence from methodical execution of the critique of finite forms of opinion and knowledge. He knows that the aggressive affirmation of finiteness of all kinds so easily conceals the attempt to shield one's own prejudices from critique, to resist the overcoming of one's own limitations. Not the fact of the 'finitude' of knowledge, but certainly the insistence on it stands constantly under suspicion of being dogmatism and it is against this that Hegel deploys both the methodical destruction of all merely static, positive truths and the system form itself, the great horizon of knowing in its entirety. Thinking with Hegel and reflecting upon his thinking means shaking the walls of habitual thinking and taking up the challenge to let *thinking itself* unfold itself as the ultimate horizon of human self-understanding and understanding of the world. This new dynamic of our horizons of thinking removes at the outset the complaint that with

Hegel or with the 'system' living philosophy necessarily succumbs to the *rigor mortis* of numbered paragraphs—Kierkegaard was not the only one who saw things in these terms and to whom Hegel appeared no longer as an Odysseus of thought, but as the staid archivist of what is already known. For anyone who has ever taken that journey of thought with Hegel, all talk of atrophy of the impulse to philosophy under the deadening weight of the system is nonsense. Always engaged (to resort to that worn-out word just one more time) and that in every object it addresses, Hegel's thought usually terminates in very apposite, and never merely superficial, very concrete assertions. Not everyone who possesses no system is for that very reason more insightful than the systematic thinker, who after all, according to Hegel, only wants to "know", "what he himself has already said."

This propaedeutic, designed as a guide to concentrated and hopefully repeated reading rather than as a final account of Hegel's philosophy, seeks to help readers find new inspiration here and now in Hegel's heritage. Hegel is, more than one might at first assume, one of the key thinkers of modern times and is perhaps precisely in this regard within the prevailing crisis of modernity ripe for rediscovery. He is a thinker who can be trusted more than others by a thought seeking its own autonomy, that wants to think for itself. This book was required because the distance between introductions, offering only rough outlines and information, and the specialist work on Hegel was becoming too great. In those terms it hopefully offers sufficient stimulus for an urgent conversation with Hegel, while showing what stimulus Hegel himself has to offer. Discussion of the vast secondary literature was not possible in a propaedeutic, even though that occasionally results in silence on who or what suggested or justified the views presented here. Of course, current options for connecting with Hegel require some references and the most important of these are given along with the sources of Hegel's texts. The larger sections are followed by representative selections of the more useful titles. Quotations are referenced according to the respective editions; consulting Hegel's texts directly is of special importance for a work like this.

*Thomas Sören Hoffmann*  
Bochum, autumn 2003

# General Literature

## Hegel's Writings

*Gesammelte Werke Ausgabe. In Verbindung mit der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft herausgegeben von der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 22 Bde.*—Collected works edition, published by the North Rhine-Westphalian Academy of Sciences in association with the German Research Foundation in 22 volumes, Hamburg 1968 ff. This is the standard critical edition of all of Hegel's works. Reference will be made where possible to this edition by the abbreviation GW followed by a Roman numeral for the volume and Arabic numbers for the pages.

Student editions of the principal works in German on the basis of the GW editions (including the GW page numbers) in modern orthography and including useful introductions and commentaries are available in the *Philosophische Bibliothek*—Philosophical library, series of the Felix Meiner publishing company, Hamburg.

The Suhrkamp edition is the *Theorie Werke Ausgabe in zwanzig Bänden*—Works in twenty volumes, ed. Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel, Frankfurt 1969–1971. This is widely used and was produced mainly on the basis of the first complete edition by the *Freundesverein des Verewigten*—the Association of Friends of the Deceased, Berlin 1832–1845, but in modernised orthography and punctuation; the *Rechtsphilosophie*—*Philosophy of Right*, volume includes Hegel's handwritten additions; the *Encyclopaedia* volumes include the additions from Hegel's lectures following the edition of the Association of Friends. Where more reliable editions are lacking, reference will be made to this edition with the abbreviation TW followed by Arabic numbers for both the volume and the page number.

*Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*—Complete works, bicentennial edition, ed. Hermann Glockner, 26 vols., 4th ed. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1964 ff. This centennial edition was produced on the basis of the Association of Friends edition but with some additions, such as the text of the *Encyclopaedia* of 1817; also included is Glockner's *Hegel Lexicon* (cited below) and his Hegel monograph.

*Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*—Lectures, selected transcripts and manuscripts, 14 vols., Hamburg 1983 ff.

*Briefe von und an Hegel*—Letters from and to Hegel, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister and Friedhelm Nicolin, 4 vols., Hamburg 1969–1981.

### *Translator's Note*

All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. All of Hegel's major texts are now available in more than one English translation and references to any of them, given for context and comparison, are not intended as recommendations. Arnold Miller's translations of the *Phenomenology* and of the *Science of Logic* are referenced beside the GW information in the text with paragraph numbers for the former and page numbers for the latter. Similarly, J. Sibree's translation is referenced in the section on the philosophy of history, because of the correspondence with the TW edition, while T.M. Knox' translations of the *Philosophy of Right* (in Stephen Houlgate's new edition) and of the *Aesthetics* are referenced beside the GW information in the respective sections, all for context and comparison. Recent translations of Hegel's other works, going back to those of H.S. Harris in the 1970s, generally include the GW page numbers, while many of the older translations are freely available on the internet. T.M. Knox' translations in the *Early Theological Writings* include the Nohl page numbers of the original publication referenced here. Finally, recent translations of Kant's works include the A and B page numbers of the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the AA page numbers of the *Akademie Ausgabe* of the collected writings for other works.

### Introductions and General Accounts

Bourgeois, Bernard, *Hegel. Les actes de l'esprit*—Hegel, acts of the spirit, Paris 2001.—Fetscher, Iring ed., *Hegel in der Sicht der neueren Forschung*—Hegel in the perspectives of recent research, Darmstadt 1973.—Fischer, Kuno, *Hegels Leben, Werke und Lehre*—Hegel's life, works and teachings, 2 vols., Heidelberg 1901 (reprint Darmstadt 4. ed. 1972).—Fulda, Hans Friedrich, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*, München 2003.—Glockner, Hermann, *Hegel*, 2 vols., 4th ed. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1964–1968.—Haering, Theodor, *Hegel. Sein Wollen und sein Werk*—Hegel, his aspiration and his work, 2 vols., Leipzig 1929/1938 (reprint Aalen 1979).—Heimann, Betty, *System und Methode in Hegels Philosophie*, Leipzig 1927.—Helferich, Christoph, *G.W. Fr. Hegel*, Stuttgart 1979 [includes primary sources, especially on the reception of Hegel's works].—Hösle, Vittorio, *Hegels System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität*—Hegel's system, the idealism of subjectivity and the problem of intersubjectivity, 2nd ed. Hamburg 1998.—Houlgate, Stephen, *Freedom, Truth, and History. An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy*, London 1991.—Kroner, Richard, *Von Kant bis Hegel*—From Kant to Hegel, 2 vols., Tübingen 1921, 3rd

ed. 1977.—Pöggeler, Otto ed., *Hegel. Einführung in seine Philosophie*—Hegel, introduction to his philosophy, Freiburg and München 1977.—Rosenkranz, Karl, *G.W.F. Hegels Leben*—G.W.F. Hegel's life, Berlin 1844 (reprint Darmstadt 1998).—Schnädelbach, Herbert, *Hegel zur Einführung*—Introduction to Hegel, 4th ed. Hamburg 2011.—Stanguennec, André, *Hegel. Une philosophie de la raison vivante*—Hegel, a philosophy of living reason, Paris 1998.—Taylor, Charles, *Hegel*, Cambridge 1975, reprint 2005.—Verra, Valerio, *Introduzione a Hegel*, 13th ed. Rome and Bari 2010.—Vetö, Miklos, *De Kant à Schelling. Les deux voies de l'Idéalisme allemand*—From Kant to Schelling, the two pathways of German idealism, 2 vols, Grenoble 1998/2000.

### Publication Series

*Hegel-Deutungen*—Hegel interpretations, Hamburg 1996 ff.—*Hegel-Forschungen*—Hegel research, Berlin 1994 ff.—*Hegelianana. Studien und Quellen zu Hegel und zum Hegelianismus*—Hegelianana, studies and sources on Hegel and Hegelianism, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York and Vienna 1991 ff.—*Hegel-Studien* supplements, Bonn 1964 ff., Hamburg 1998 ff.—*Spekulation und Erfahrung. Texte und Untersuchungen zum Deutschen Idealismus*—Speculation and experience, texts and studies on German idealism, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1986 ff.

### Biographical Sources

Hoffmeister, Johannes ed., *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*—Documents on Hegel's development, Stuttgart 2nd ed. 1974.—Nicolin, Günther, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*—Hegel in the accounts of his contemporaries, Hamburg 1970.—Sziborsky, Lucia and Schneider, Helmut eds., *Friedhelm Nicolin, Auf Hegels Spuren. Beiträge zur Hegel-Forschung*—Friedhelm Nicolin, in Hegel's tracks, contributions to Hegel research (*Hegel-Deutungen*—Hegel interpretations vol. 1), Hamburg 1996.

### Resources

#### *Journals*

*Annalen der internationalen Gesellschaft für dialektische Philosophie Societas Hegelianana*—Annals of the international society for dialectical philosophy

Societas Hegeliana, Cologne 1983–1988.—*The Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, Oxford 1980 ff.—*Hegel-Jahrbuch*—Hegel annual, Munich 1961–1964, Meisenheim am Glan 1965–1972, Cologne etc. 1973 ff., Berlin 1993 ff. (with interruptions)—*Hegel-Studien*—Hegel studies, vols. 1–32, Bonn 1961–1997; from vol. 33 Hamburg 1998 ff.—*Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus*—International yearbook of German idealism, Berlin and New York 2003 ff.—*Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*—Hegel research annual, Sankt Augustin 1995 ff.—*The Owl of Minerva*. Biannual journal of the Hegel Society of America, Villanova (Pa) 1969 ff.—*Recherches Hégéliennes*—Hegel research, Poitiers 1970 ff.

### *Bibliographies*

*Bulletin de Littérature Hégélienne* (supplement to the *Archives de philosophie*), Paris 1970 ff.—Gloy, Karen and Lambrecht, Rainer eds., *Bibliographie zu Hegels »Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse«*. Primär- und Sekundärliteratur 1817–1994—Bibliography to Hegel's "Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline", primary and secondary literature 1817–1994, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1995.—Steinhauer, Kurt ed., *Hegel. Bibliographie. Materialien zur Geschichte der internationalen Hegel-Rezeption und zur Philosophie-Geschichte*—Hegel bibliography, materials on the history of the international Hegel reception and on the history of philosophy, vol. 1 (1802 to 1975), Munich, New York, London and Paris 1980; vol. 2 (to 1990) Munich 1998.—Continuing bibliography in *Hegel-Studien*.

### *Lexika*

Cobben, Paul G., Cruysbergh, Paul, Jonkers, Peter and de Vos, Lu eds., *Hegel-Lexikon*, Darmstadt 2006.—Glockner, Hermann, *Hegel-Lexikon*, 4 vols., 2nd ed. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1957 (based on the *Jubiläumsausgabe* cited above).—Jaeschke, Walter, *Hegel-Handbuch. Leben—Werk—Wirkung*—Hegel-handbook, life, work, influence, 2nd ed. Stuttgart 2010.—Reinicke, Helmut, *Register zur Werkausgabe in zwanzig Bänden*—Index to the edition of the works in twenty volumes, 4th ed. Frankfurt am Main 2000.



# Introduction

## 1 A Philosophy of Freedom

Is philosophy just an academic glass bead game? The truth is it can only be pursued in that way at the cost of serious misunderstandings. Hegel did not write for scholars' bookshelves (his own can be found recreated in the Hegel Archive in Bochum), nor for professional writers. Hegel's real impetus is perhaps best explained by a word that more than any other provides the key to his thought—that brilliant and powerful word *freedom*.

Hegel found the mission of philosophy in its contribution to the liberation of the thought and practice of human beings, which in itself constitutes a compelling reason for a vital commitment to it. The two are far more intimately related than is generally realised; a free practice without freedom of thought is as impossible as free thinking that has no practical consequences. Freedom is the fundamental principle Hegel shares with Kant and the other representatives of German idealism, all of whose initiatives focused on a 'grammar of freedom' as the key to a more humane, unalienated world. Without this grammar, this way of explaining the world, the world as the other out there remains not only distinct from us but distinctly foreign to us, inscrutable, inaccessible, unfit for human habitation. Both Hegel and Schelling in their earliest writings spoke of a "horror of the objective world",<sup>1</sup> oppressing with a terrible necessity the consciousness that does not fully understand itself from within its own freedom. Escaping, theoretically and practically, from the domination of an

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1 Schelling, *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen*—On the I as principle of philosophy or on the unconditional in human knowledge, in Schröter, Manfred ed., *Schellings Werke* (ww) Munich 1956, vol. 1, p. 81 and *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus*—Philosophical letters on dogmatism and Kant's critical philosophy, loc. cit. p. 262. English translations of both of these essays by F. Marti in *J.F.W. Schelling: The Unconditional in Human Knowledge, Four Early Essays* (1794–1796), Lewisburg 1980, in "On the I...": "terror of the objective world" p. 67; in "Philosophical letters...": "terrors of the objective world" p. 198. Hegel, *Die Positivität der christlichen Religion*—The positivity of the Christian religion, GW 1, 378. In fact "Schrecken der objektiven Welt"—horror of the objective world, occurs at the very end of Hegels manuscript, in an incomplete sentence which Hermann Nohl did not include in his edition, *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen 1907), and hence is not to be found in Knox's translation of the essay in *G.W.F. Hegel: Early Theological Writings*, London 1940.

immediacy that in this sense remains opaque was by no means an afterthought for the young philosophers. They were under no illusion that the “horrors of objectivity” continually take on new and diverse forms. It was always easy for them to find examples in the alienation symbols and dystopias of the modern world as their traces proliferated constantly throughout its literature and history, philosophy and art. Less obvious perhaps is the insight that restoring balance makes an active and energetic philosophical practice from the standpoint of freedom absolutely indispensable. How then is this to be achieved?

The philosophy of German idealism, including Hegel's at the end of the period, always justified its standpoint from the axiom that it must be possible to find and to formulate the ultimate sense of everything externally objective in a reflexive relation, in a self-relation. In the freedom, the autonomy of the concept, over which we do not simply dispose but which as subjects we ourselves *are*, lies thus also the key to breaking open external realities, which cannot withstand the power of the reflexive relation. From every *it*, from every third-person, there should emerge an *I*, a first-person or better a *you* and a *we*, at least in the sense of a *resonance chamber* of freedom, which Hegel thinks is also how we can understand nature. In this there is certainly no promise that mental, social or scientific alienation would be forever eliminated. The expectation is not that mental forms and institutional structures of unfreedom could never again acquire historical power; constant work is required, constant work on discovering and creating, exploring and explaining the *realm of freedom*. Autonomy in thought and action only becomes actuality by *achieving* it through continuous struggle, only by becoming actual for us in each situation. When this work ceases and thought relinquishes its own power, then “respectfully deluded,” in Adorno's words, it surrenders reality to those who are “the highest paid, thereby making itself measurable.”<sup>2</sup> Thought withdraws from the world in all its teeming life and makes itself into a thing, a brain for example, a thing from which freedom must disappear. Clearly, even when human beings remove themselves in this way from reality and place themselves in an objectified realm—confusing themselves for example with their genomes or their brains—there is no other way for this to happen than by resort to figures of thought, to categories, which themselves are functions of our original self-determination or of the *process of knowing* that is the essence of man. The destiny of man is determined as much as anything else by the categories in, and the categorial levels on which, we think.

The movement of thought from Kant to Hegel is precisely for this reason centred on *category critique*. It is the attempt to break through the logic of

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2 Th. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, No. 126, in *Gesammelte Schriften*—Collected writings v. 4, Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 224. English translation by Edmund Jephcott, London, 1974.

abdication of a free self-understanding by locating the root of *all* logic in reflexive self-relation and placing it firmly within the actual pursuit of knowledge; this not only for practical purposes, but, as will be explored in greater detail below, also for theoretical, indeed for eminently logical reasons. Kant was the first to withhold reverence for the 'things in themselves' and steer philosophical inquiry instead to the theoretical and practical form constituents that make things what they are, i.e. as rationally determined. Against the 'seeing' bound to external things and the domination of the third person, Fichte promoted the philosophically fundamental primacy of the 'seeing of seeing'. For Fichte philosophy was the practical knowledge of the process of understanding that can never fall under the sway and compulsion of the object, of what is understood. Schelling then sought to release what actually happens in the process of cognition as the *unconditional* from the subjective mode of its apprehension and so promoted the concept of an 'absolute knowing' that is itself the *idea*, absolute actuality, a concept Hegel's dialectical logic of self and selfness then takes over and binds to the forms of the constitution of well-defined, determinate objectivity and subjectivity.

On this trajectory the project of reducing the objective to the reflexive produced an insight into that determinate objectivity reflection takes upon itself. It emerged that reflexivity cannot be confined to the world of thinking. For it to have content, it must be simultaneously the reflection in what is other than (mere) thought; it must be reflection within the *in-itself*, within substance too. It is clearly no longer a matter of that reflection characterising the *philosophies of reflection*, to which Hegel counts even Fichte. What is important now is the *concept* as a process of knowing that truly carries itself within itself, comprehending itself by including the other it claims to comprehend, that other which the philosophies of reflection left standing in its external immediacy. Knowledge as *knowing* is no longer (as for Kant and still for epistemology) merely a 'performance' of the subject. Here in the emphatic sense in which Hegel can now take it, cognition is not primarily a topic in the philosophy of subjective spirit, in psychology. *Knowing* is for Hegel emphatically the absolute foundation, the *ground of being* of subjectivity as also of its world. We do not *first* exist and then *also* know; we exist only as the pursuit of knowledge and this not only in cognitive performances, but in every respect, as such. In developed cognition as such then, firmly established as explicit subjectivity, knowing comes into its own; it is here a pure medium transparent to itself and is then the middle term of the syllogism of conscious knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The process of knowing is even, as Hegel can say especially after his Jena system drafts, this

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3 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline* (1830) § 577. In the final paragraph of the *Encyclopaedia* the "idea of philosophy" aware of itself is the *medius terminus* of

side of that self-awareness; it is in fact a linking, an actual self-relating, a differentiated unity.

This is the insight that enabled Hegel to recover the Greeks' *logos*, the collecting relation, as no mere historical reference, but as the central concept of philosophical thinking. The *logos*, in Greek always equally objective and subjective, is primarily the relation that grounds itself within itself; the self-unfolding of an intelligible *one* into *many* as well as the restoration of the *one* from this *many*. The Greek *logos* is prior to subjective cognition, which thus initially only knows it by recognition, and precisely in this sense is knowing for Hegel, understood as a self-relation culminating in manifestation, prior to the individual knowledge act—with the proviso, of course, that this philosophical knowledge act is fully aware that what it knows is not something alien to it, that it is but giving voice to its own self. In contrast to the Greeks, however, the philosophical knowledge act is not somehow accidentally a part of the process of knowing, now it is the very being of knowledge, its *arrival in the world*.

Hegel's philosophy regarded this fundamental insight, here only briefly stated, as key to the issue of freedom. It did this critically, as outlined above, with reference to the forms of externalised being, the forms of abstraction, of image-thinking, of arbitrary authority. It exposed the processes of *splitting* the self in all its forms as a path of the self-denial of knowing, departing from the ground of the existing self. To that extent one can indeed find this dimension, namely that of the philosophy of spirit, even in Hegel's logical texts, especially in the references that go beyond logic into the so-called *Realphilosophie* (real philosophy) of nature and of spirit. This perspective became especially prominent in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> What is ultimately decisive, however, is not the critical, but the affirmative dimension of Hegel's thought. This draws on what (like the *logos*) affirms itself and this is the knowing that constructs itself in differentiated self-relations; it is what is *in itself transcendent* and which is for that very reason free and absolute. It is, as Hegel likes to say, the concept as such that remains, even in the 'extreme' of individuality, by itself. In fact, nobody ever thought through the ultimately *anarchic* dimension of subjectivity as Hegel did. Anarchic because it contains its own sustaining *arché*, its origination, which is its own because it cannot be subsumed under

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the absolute syllogism of reason; cognition is thus no longer, as in the philosophy of reflection, just mind.

4 Typically in the direction in which Michael Theunissen managed to steer the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy for some time; then Hegel's *Science of Logic* acquired significance for the philosophy of history and in the philosophy of the social sciences but not, it has to be said, without doing some violence to the text.

any other alien principle. This is another reason why the oft-repeated reservations against Hegel's claims to *totality* and *system* in his philosophy are out of place here; they belong to that still tenacious fear of the objective world, fearing that subjectivity can only be saved *in opposition to* the whole truth, only as a sort of fenced-in immediacy. Hegel's whole philosophy is the proof that this view harbours an abstract, romantic and even nihilistic concept of subjectivity, one that does not assert subjectivity in the radicalness of its negativity, not as the *topos* of real absolute knowing. Hegel's point here is that subjectivity truly grasped not merely as *capable of the concept*, but as the *existing concept itself*, emerges from the coincidence of totality and individuality—just as the word *I* quite obviously means both one and all, just as qualified freedom is always the freedom of all and every individual, and just as it is the nature of knowing to be in the possession of the individual doing the knowing while remaining simultaneously universal. It is easy to see that where Hegel's simultaneity of totalisation and individualisation is abandoned, ontologies and axiologies change fundamentally. Actual reality migrates from the concept and is then supposedly to be found in hard, external facts. No less inevitable appears the degradation of the *good* down to an empirical intention, down into that abstract morality which in every case denies an independent actual power of the good and even takes pride (not without a certain justice) in its discovery that the good cannot be found among the facts. The chorus of rejection unleashed by Hegel's well-known formula from the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*—"What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational" (GW XIV/1, 14)—as if he meant to glorify and sanctify everything factual including the factually irrational—is essentially the same complaint of empirical subjectivity, which (again in a sense correctly) does not want all its value judgments about facts to be prescribed to it. The danger here is that it never becomes conscious of the implications. These include the implicit acceptance of the impotence of reason and regarding the realisation of reason as a subjective activity, i.e. the business of a power that is not itself reason, along with the silent affirmation of the thereby incriminated world, in which reason is not supposed to be the determining power.<sup>5</sup> Hegel's philosophy is a committed struggle against the

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5 The 'actuality' of the organism is its health, without which illness can neither exist nor be defined. The view that sickness is the real actuality and that health is only to be induced in this reality by external intervention confuses the concept with its privation and can for that reason only give rise to privations. No one, least of all Hegel, claims that unfreedom *should* exist, just as little as he disputes that it *can* empirically exist and become very widespread. But such a given situation can only be overcome by the power of already actual freedom, not merely from projects aiming at it.

claims of the unreality of reason and if one understands by *idealism* utopian dreaming, it is certainly not that kind of idealism, but rather a *realism of reason*. This philosophy says that we are always involved in actuality in ways very different from how we would like to dream about it. What we are and say, how we live and what we do, all that is much more actual than we realise and at its heart is certainly no mere external reflection of something completely distinct from thought. It is exactly this heart that Hegel addresses with his dialectical method, which is nothing other than raising consciousness about the power of relating, about the fact that *being is linking* and all determination is generated from relations. *Dialectic* is here not the universal key to all problems, as little as systematic thinking involves some sort of desire for omniscience. It means concrete thinking that sees difference as the potential for building relationships and is hence continually updating knowledge in those terms; this even with regard to the *ultimate opposition* of being and thought and no less important with regard to totality, which is never to be had in a simple depiction or image, nor in a compact formula. Dialectic is, one could say, methodically broken totality simultaneously avoiding both the denial and the excessive imposition of totality. It is the perennial call to precise philosophical work that cannot be satisfied with quick informations or handy formulae.

We shall get to know Hegel in the course of this account of his philosophy in his on-going precision work on the *concept* and that requires exerting ourselves to avoid reducing what he says to such formulae. At the beginning of the twentieth century an alert thinker, Karl Joël, complained that as a result of academic classificatory science and its tendency to historicise everything, we have gotten into the habit of “travelling through the literatures of different epochs and peoples with our Bädeler tourist guidebooks” and of seeing “among all the fairy tale castles only the thorn hedges and cobwebs”. As an example of this in philosophy Joël cites the way Hegel was treated. He actually says “to the examination candidate it is a bitter pill indeed, when for Hegel he has to memorise formulations like ‘the philosopher of absolute spirit in the form of dialectical development’. Who,” asks Joël, “would want to open bottles bearing such labels?”<sup>6</sup> Not the least of our tasks will be to avoid bottling up the fundamental impulse of Hegel’s thinking. Instead the aim is to give voice to the living inspiration behind it—for the examination candidates too—not only because this fundamental impulse is one of freedom and, as we know that like is only known by like, it must be grasped in the spirit of freedom of thought,

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6 Karl Joël, *Antibarbarus. Vorträge und Aufsätze*—Antibarbarian. Lectures and essays, Jena 1914, p. 168.

but also because only in this way is there a chance of getting to know Hegel as our contemporary, as our conversation partner.

## 2 Prejudices and Irritations

The fact that Hegel's philosophy gives rise to irritations these days on a quite broad front has already been referred to. The popular scepticism hardly promotes unbiased reception of what the philosopher himself had to say. It seems reasonable then to address in advance some of the most common objections—although it has to be said that comprehensive and well founded answers to the doubts raised can only be given once insight into the greater systematic contexts is gained, i.e. only from the results of close analysis of Hegel's own texts as they emerge in the course of the book. Here prejudices facing Hegel's philosophy and irritations arising from it are given some preliminary treatment grouped under the keywords around which they seem to proliferate.

### 2.1 Totality

In the preface to his first major work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel proposes the theorem (central not only to this work) “the true is the whole” (GW IX, 19; Miller ¶ 20), a theorem binding truth and totality so tightly together, it may appear to set the philosophical hurdles too high exceeding all human measure. Did not Kant set the unattainability of theoretical concepts of totality at the centre of his critique of metaphysics and do not so many from Kierkegaard to Lévinas go beyond Kant to bring out the element of practical alienation, the frivolity and even violence inherent in all orientation “to the whole”? Is not totality always a form of deception, or even of ideology? In this sense Adorno proposed against Hegel his own theorem, “the whole is the false.”<sup>7</sup> Adorno's statement cannot of course be an apodictic, self-evidently true assertion about the whole and must be understood rather as a counterclaim to Hegel in the sense of an objection, relying on support for its complaint from actual and very specific historical experience with a totality that became thoroughly political. The question Adorno's counterclaim ultimately wants to bring to debate is: does not a philosophy referring to the whole, thereby a ‘system philosophy’, as indeed Hegel understands it, always betray the individual, painting over the hardships of reality and covering up the gaps between the two, while in fact installing a supposedly comprehensive plan deriving from fantasies of the absolute power of thought rather than from its critical use. If, however,

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<sup>7</sup> Adorno op. cit., No. 29.

our thinking is always marked by finitude, by the scars of the here and now and remains forever provisional, what then is the point of the reference to the seven-league boots of a world spirit when the desire to mirror ourselves in it can in any case only produce deceptive chimeras? If the whole is that which is *essentially* impenetrable and not transparent, what option remains then besides always mistrusting it?

We shall see in greater detail later, especially as we make our way through the *Phenomenology*, that a specific assumption lies behind this objection, one that Hegel himself does not make. It is the assumption that individuality and totality, singularity and universality ultimately constitute an *absolute* disjunct that cannot be mediated and not (which would be Hegel's view) that they find their realisation, their complete meanings only in and through each other. Hegel holds that the *singular* actually excluded from the whole—perhaps a living thing outside of life, a concrete 'being endowed with reason' outside of universal reason—would be *abstract* and *untrue*, something that only exists for a specific, isolated form of imagination. Conversely, the *whole* here would be merely the *other*, which beyond the individuals obviously cannot be a whole, but only itself *one* element in the opposition, in fact just another individual. The relation between a language and its individual speakers can give us a preliminary understanding of Hegel's thinking here. As clear as it is that it is not the language as the universal, but only the *individual* speaker who speaks, just as clear is it that this speaker does not stand 'outside' the language or in opposition to it. Whoever lets the language instead of the speaker speak has already fallen into the trap of hypostasising moments and simulating a *whole* that is unquestionably false. The speaker is what he is—speaker of the language, and that also in terms of his individuality—only through the power of the language (its grammar, semantics and its sounds for example, its possibilities and traditions), all of which he brings to bear in his speaking, indeed this is the only way to lend it existence. The individual who wanted to deny the universal of language on principle could only do so by remaining silent—thereby rendering himself no longer *individual*. Briefly then, language without the speaker is a language with nothing to say just as the speaker without words is dumb and no longer a speaker. Language and speaker, universal and particular are true and capable of truth only with each other, only in unity. Behind Adorno's objection to the truth of the totality, in his attempt *in principle* to hold the two sides apart, there lies a kind of romanticism of the unmediated possession of truth, which when in doubt prefers to refrain from engagement with the truth rather than let itself be brought into question by that engagement and its dynamics.<sup>8</sup>

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8 One encounters the motif of falling silent again and again in Adorno. Music for instance is nowadays apparently only "possible" when it "measures itself against the most extreme posi-

In all this we recognise the anxiety of Schiller's beautiful soul, the fear of risking its own beauty in compromising with the universal, and with that more than a trace of a not yet overcome "horror of objectivity" for which the full critique of the categories—here specifically the concepts *individual* and *universal*—still lies ahead. Whatever else it might contain—the inclination to taking stand-points perhaps, held in reserve against its mediation, which would then be clearly dogmatic—does not interest us here. Of interest in all this is only that Hegel's thinking may well have been more critical than the critique, at least insofar as he did not regard taking up and defending standpoints endowed with truth as having the last word in the philosophical discussion.

Closer examination shows that the historical experiences Adorno refers to are not experiences with *living* totality in Hegel's sense, not experiences of alienation finally overcome, but those of alienation from a socially installed appearance of totality only maintained by violence. Hegel's philosophy offers an alternative to the concept of totality that does not find the whole in the consonance of totalisation and individualisation; it opposes such a totality that imposes itself on the individual externally with threats and violence and proposes instead one that actually completes the individual as well as completing itself in its process of individualisation. This is elementary in the case of the concept of life, which does not mean the *untruth* but rather the very *substance* of what is living, substance as its general power of building relations, itself nothing without the concrete living thing. It holds just as much for the concept of spirit on its different levels, for concepts of custom, history and religion as well as ultimately for that of reason, which likewise is only capable of truth in the simultaneity of its inherent universality with its individual embodiment and certainly not as absolutely particular. *Truth* itself is nothing other than the fulfilment of the universal in the particular and the individual in the totality, where of course universal and particular, individual and whole cannot be fixed as given 'entities' beside that relation in which each is fulfilled in its other. *Truth* is the *potential for relating* possessed by a category that actually proves itself in practice. *Untruth* is its isolated or violent self-preservation. Bad metaphysics happens when, for example, the I has unity and existence for itself completely independent of its relation to other I's or to the not-I. It is dogmatism to assign meaning as such to concepts without understanding them also as the exponents of determinate or self-determining logical relations to others. Sharply fixed meaning is not something that concepts have; that belongs to the imagination as the imaging faculty; the concept is always a

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tion, against its own silence." *Über einige Schwierigkeiten des Komponierens heute*—On some difficulties in composition today, in: *Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 17*—Collected writings vol. 17, p. 273.

critique of the fixations of the imagination by elucidating the dialectics of relations and meanings. In this light, Hegel's statement that the true is the whole is just the most urgent call to struggle against representational, image thinking; it challenges this kind of thinking to look on as its fixations disappear in order to get to know itself anew as a power of relating, as a logical power. This all brings us quite naturally to the topics *system* and *dialectic*.

## 2.2 *System*

The orientation of thought to totality is for Hegel no mere possibility, it is a primary duty of philosophical thinking; indeed it is its own genuine proof of identity. Thus Hegel began his Berlin lectures with his course on philosophy based on the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, because the “*foundation*” for philosophy can only be found “in its *total systematic range*”, “there is no first and no last, for everything is carried and held—*mutually*, together as *one*.”<sup>9</sup> Systematic philosophy has thus not only the horizontal dimension of maximal extension in the syntaxes of its diverse objects. Vital to the undertaking is also the vertical aspect, i.e. the universal validation of the intensive ground of philosophy, of reason manifest in itself. The one cannot be separated from the other, as little as there can be any ultimate separation of form and content in philosophy. The systematic approach, according to Hegel, entails the keen awareness of the immanent continuity of philosophy in the sense that it is capable of being systematic in all its objects. Systematic thinking is thus a principle of constantly generating philosophy anew and is as such inseparable from it.

Clearly, systematic thinking is not in any sense an exclusive privilege of philosophical reason. Non-philosophical understanding too feels the *need for totality*, namely in the orientation of its thinking to completeness, to consistency, and the tendency to stress the exclusiveness of its standpoint. There are plenty of examples of this. Ideas like that of a universal science or of a physics explaining everything certainly do not acquire their plausibility from their objects, but from an impulse of thought immanent to them. When

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9 Hegel, *Berliner Antrittsrede*, in *Berliner Schriften* (1818–1831)—Berlin inaugural address, in Berlin writings (1818–1831), ed. W. Jaeschke, Hamburg 1997, p. 49. Jaeschke reproduces under this title the entire first lecture of Hegel's first course at the Berlin university in October 1818 on the *Encyclopaedia*, of which the so-called ‘inaugural address’ was just the first half hour or so. Hegel calls it a “foreword” (*Vorwort*). The quotation here is found in the first paragraph following the “foreword” and hence is not to be found in the English translation of the “Berlin inaugural address” in *Hegel's Political Writings* ed. Lawrence Dickey and H.N. Nisbet, Cambridge 1999.

methodologies in the individual sciences aspire to sole validity, they do so by force of their inner rationality, never because the ‘things’ cause them to do it. Hegel occasionally refers to the “orientation to the totality of necessity”, which he also finds in the understanding laboriously working its way through fragmentary details, as a “secret potency of reason”.<sup>10</sup> The totality that is supposed to be the true, the only one of interest to philosophy, is not made solely from thought or constructed by the understanding, it must be rather “the first thing in knowledge”,<sup>11</sup> its genuine starting point. Comprehending is, in contrast to representational or image thinking, always the concrete instantiation of reason in the wider, indeed in the widest possible horizon. At once intensive and extensive comprehension of the matter, systematic thinking thus, in complete generality, starts from the whole instead of from the parts—from the whole certainly not as a finished thing, but as the *knowledge continuum*, mediation as such, as Hegel says. This is what makes it the perpetual detailed updating of the knowledge continuum in its determinacy; it is not a matter of complying with given or established fixed structures. Comprehending includes a consciousness of the primacy of synthetic over analytical knowing, of relating over fixing the *relata*—of the systematic outreach into wider contexts over the ‘inventory taking’ of the *given*, which in synthetic terms in fact turns out to be not simply given at all but mediated. Thus, the misunderstandings behind the objections to Hegel’s philosophy on account of the form of the system as such either promote the primacy of the analytical or misinterpret the concept of system as a claim to a finished inventory of the world, reducing knowledge to a passive acknowledgement rather than an actual process of active knowing. Hegel’s system does not hinder active cognition, on the contrary, *system* is the governing principle of active knowing, the very condition of its possibility. System is not a corset laid on the life of the spirit and the mind, but the knowledge that this life ranges further than whatever happens to be the topic of interest here and now, that it is continuous beyond any current issues and that rational division can only be immanent to that life and not external to it. Systematic philosophy can in no way be construed as relying on a product of reflection that is supposedly complete; it is rather the renewal of the *ur-continuity* of the process of knowledge, if need be against itself as much as against its other, difference—against what is already known, the content, but

10 Hegel, *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, GW IV, 17. Cf. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy* translated by H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf, Albany, 1977, p. 15, GW page numbers included.

11 Hegel, *Glauben und Wissen*, GW IV, 393. Cf. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge* transl. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris, Albany, 1977, p. 35, GW page numbers included.

also against the other knowledge and the other content, all of which are only capable of being what they are within the horizon of knowing itself and never in simple immediacy.

Kant demonstrated the original synthetic meaning of the activity of content-laden proposition making that expands knowledge. Indeed, even the simple proposition or judgment of the form 'A is B' is only possible by referring back to the continuum of knowing; this appears as the actual ground of the judgment assumed in the copula evoking the third term of the proposition, its *medius terminus* or middle term. Systematic thinking is then nothing more than naming this mediating factor, explicitly exhibiting the principle of motion supporting the leap from A to B, holding them both in immediate unity, and as such not simply a precondition but much more: it is the totality they presuppose. This third factor, C, at once requires the further mediation of a D or an E, at least as long as it is not immediately grasped as relation, i.e. as the reflection of A as B, of B as A—for Kant the 'I think' represents in blanket coverage the position of this reflexive ground. Kant's 'I think' contains the logical continuum as a universal; the categories and schemata break it down into particular propositions. Hegel counters that each logical content implicitly contains a principle of its logical continuity which amounts to the same thing as its self-determination. The task of the system is then thinking through the content in its *continuous self-determination*. The system frees the category or the term from the appearance of its isolation by revealing the starters for the next, following category within it. Thinking systematically thus means being able to take the next steps without having to renounce those already taken. The platitude that no finite being will ever finally formulate the definitive system of philosophy does not take into account the fact that when a finite being really *knows*, it *eo ipso* locates itself in a medium that is in fact real not as an affirmation of its finitude, but as the continuation beyond its boundaries. The I is still I within the not-I, in the other of itself; it is knowing self-preservation in the face of this other and is not simply limited by it. Systematic thinking in Hegel's sense is the reminder that thinking is *logical self-preservation*, not the point by point validation of subjectivity as merely the expression of "views and opinions".<sup>12</sup> Self-preservation here is not a matter of will and strategy, much less one of collective will and collective strategies. It entails instead openness to a logical rhythm of continuum and determination, requiring of course renunciation of a firm position, of the

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12 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 14 Remark. Cf. the English translations of the first part of the *Encyclopaedia* (introductory texts and the logic) by William Wallace, Oxford 1892; by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting and H.S. Harris, Indianapolis 1991; and by K. Brinkmann and D.O. Dahlstrom, Cambridge 2010.

standpoint fixed in advance that reduces thinking to a *means* for maintaining that standpoint. Thinking that is merely a means for the defence of a position and not its own self-sustaining logic can never be anything more than ideology. The original vitality of reason itself is the matter of the system of philosophy, which is never about secondary rationalisations. Another platitude is that what finite beings bring forth will not always be born of this original vitality, but again this is not an objection to the fact that philosophy must be committed first and last to that original vitality of reason. Philosophy demonstrates this commitment, according to Hegel, by showing its original dialectical competence. The location, not the tool, of the system is the dialectic.

### 2.3 *Dialectic*

In the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology* where Hegel speaks of the whole and the true, he goes on to state that the whole is not to be taken as a finished and, as it were, empirically graspable result, but instead must be understood from the dynamics of its own *development*. The whole is thus always the tension between first and last, between the beginning and the *telos* of knowing. The *first* is also the (true or self-verifying) motion that interprets itself, that fulfils itself. It is never merely the specific starting point without being also the impulse to obtain the gain in determination, not its already finished and sedimented possession. Set in this tension, philosophy is not a science expressed in individual sentences, certainly not in precepts and combinations of sentences. It is a science that consists in the competence for liberating both individual images and, in the same way, individual sentences from their isolation so that they can speak through each other. One can call this competence *dialectic* so long as one avoids the image of a clattering algorithm for generating sentences or of “a subjective switching system of reasoning back and forth”,<sup>13</sup> recalling instead the reference from the individual statement back to the totality, its essential connection to the continuum of reason as its general horizon. All attempts to turn the dialectic into a formal instrument of learning or teaching, or even to ‘operationalise’ it, to transform it into a handy instrument of the understanding are doomed to fail. Hegel himself is reluctant to say too much in the form of general observations about the dialectic. The reader has to rely largely on the philosopher’s concrete dialectical practice; he looks in vain for rules and formal structures. Readers who are familiar with the popular and oft repeated view that the dialectic is defined as a sequence of three levels (‘thesis—antithesis—synthesis’) will be surprised not to find anything like that in Hegel’s writings and they are well advised to approach the problem of

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13 *Encyclopaedia* § 81 Remark.

the dialectic as Hegel sees it without such schematic expectations.<sup>14</sup> For this topic too, all we can do here is give a profile of Hegel's philosophy, which is eminently dialectical, to show how far it departs from the widespread misrepresentations of the character of his method.

Dialectic is the—unquestionably irritating—way philosophy begins not with a 'something', not with a fixed departure point, but right in the *middle* of all polar oppositions with their genesis, overcoming and mediation. This is the beginning, to take an example from a concrete logical sphere, not with the terms of a syllogism, but with that which in a syllogism performs the deduction, with the 'motion of concluding' itself. The irritations to which dialectical thinking gives rise are typically associated with the focus on fuzzy, apparently indeterminate mediation instead of on what is already mediated and well-defined. Dialectic does not focus on what is well-defined in terms of identity and difference but on the activity: not on identity but on the process of identification, not on difference but on the process of differentiation; these processes are forms of self-relating and as such lie at the roots of determinate relations. Dialectic is in this sense essentially the plea for an *active* instead of a static concept of philosophy. This is why dialectic insists at the gateway to philosophy on dispensing with fixed and finished affirmations and firm images of the world, unspoken or otherwise, and is, where it encounters such assumptions, at first their destruction. Dialectic shares with scepticism a readiness to negate all merely immediate knowledge. The negation is dialectical (rather than sceptical) only if its result is more than the negation itself, a definite *mediated* immediacy that counts both the negated knowledge and the motion of its negation among its moments. While consistent scepticism leads to the *epoché*, to the withholding of judgment, and with that to the cessation of communication altogether, the point of the dialectic is to validate the claims of the living logos against what is merely immediate through the limiting insertion of this immediate given into the logical horizon, the logical field comprising both what is present and what is absent and where alone communication has the possibility of becoming definite knowledge. Dialectically speaking, determinate knowledge is *knowledge in the horizon of knowing itself*; it is fundamentally generated from the totality while simultaneously bringing that totality into the space of our knowledge.

These features of the dialectical approach to philosophy may be very general, but they certainly do not lack the reference to experience. Dialectic is, as Hegel understands it, in no way an act of reflection or of merely formal method;

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<sup>14</sup> What one does find in Hegel is rather the triad *concept—realisation—totality*, a 'method schema' he developed in Jena.

it is subjective as much as objective reality and as such refers to *things* not only to *thoughts* of *things*. The history of dialectic begins with Zeno of Elea's discussion of the contradictions in phenomenal appearances not just in thought and Hegel did everything he could to counter its confinement to thinking or to errors of thought. Still, dialectic is principally concerned with our primary understanding of ourselves, with the 'world views' and knowledge horizons against the background of which specific knowledge takes shape. There has never been an immediate knowledge of man, of the world or of the meaning and purpose of all existence that has not succumbed to its own dialectic; there are no analytical unities here nor is there any maintenance of abstract identity; or if so, then only at the price of fanaticism. Meaning horizons disappear as horizons of *meaning* as soon as they are transformed into fixed inventories, classical culture into classicism, science into 'scientific *Weltanschauung*'. In the political sphere the risk increases of constitutional decay when the principles of reason lying at the foundation of a constitution are taken as "immediate knowledge" or as static certainties, not implemented and taken to heart in their original sense. Binding the universal and the individual together in its free determination, the concept of the *dignity of man* is an idea that is for human beings not simply self-evident. Its true meaning had to be explicated, developed and propagated over the course of centuries, which is why, when it is finally written down as the supreme principle of a political constitution, its validity never stands unchallenged. Even if it survives initial attacks it can still end up becoming a fetish without significance or succumbing to trivialisation, robbing it of its sharp edge against its negations, which can always arise from completely unexpected quarters confounding established practice and previous experience. Dialectically understood, the dignity of man is not the kind of thing that can be simply incorporated into constitutions without question, no matter how clearly the need for codification of a statement of this sort to lend it legal force may lie in its concept. Human dignity is not something that exists out there somehow, outside of human practice; it is only real in the actual practice of implementing it. This is precisely how dialectic deals with the categorical principles (both theoretical and practical) taken as valid in any given historical period as they determine global interpretations from the everyday life-world all the way to dominant scientific theories. Dialectic reminds us that all knowledge, all knowing is no more than mere 'shine', static reflection image, as long as it stands in the grip of presuppositions and *eo ipso* is not grasped as actual knowing, not apprehended as but a moment of the totality of knowing. Thus dialectic offers no grounds at all for any kind of blind faith in science, for all (objective) knowledge is only actual in concrete application, as successful mediation fulfilling concrete goals here and now within the logical universal of

knowing itself. Dialectic does not negate these concrete goals, but it certainly questions their range, which cannot in every respect be taken as the ultimate criteria, for other concrete goals jostle for attention beside them. The aims of medicine and those of law, for example, are not always the same and not always compatible with each other; the same is true for those of the state and of religion or of the economy, well founded and legitimate though each may be in its own sphere. The conflict of goals admits of no easy arbitration by a refereeing theoretical standpoint and there is in it something of the dialectic of actuality, not only that of the theories. For Plato dialectic necessarily raises the question of the absolute goal, only knowable to the dialecticians because their perspectives are not limited by any individual goals. The absolute goal, determined in this way by the dialectic, standing against the private purposes of mere perspectives is philosophical knowing itself, the totality of determination. It is totality that asserts its own validity knowing itself through the dialectic; it is totality that requires the art of hovering between the concrete reflection points, all of which is dialectic, as its only adequate medium.

Hegel countered the Kantian narrowing of philosophy to subjectivism by identifying the fundamental problem of philosophy as recapturing the logical dimension in its ancient sense, i.e. liberating us from the binding to our own private standpoint (the “personal insight” that, as Heraclitus sees it, is the enemy of the *logos*).<sup>15</sup> The logical dimension is the power over *consciousness*, which latter the Hegelian dialectic initially understands as positioning, taking standpoints, but which can be elevated and incorporated into the cosmos of knowing. Thus Hegel achieves an expansion of range over the ancient dialectic, no longer confined to the realities, now it addresses mental factors as such. There is no dialectic of consciousness in the philosophy of the ancients and certainly not one that terminates in liberation from the *opposition of consciousness*, the subject-object opposition, from the merely objective relation into a free reflexive relation. Hegel’s dialectic liberated consciousness—first in the *Phenomenology* (an issue discussed below extensively in the chapter devoted to this work)—from previous roles as passive photographer of the external world or its “inner” projector, casting it instead *interactively* bound up with its world; not merely becoming well-defined or determinate, consciousness is here itself a determining factor right from the start. One can sum up the *Phenomenology* in a nutshell thus: “Describe the world to me and I will tell you the categorial form your consciousness follows and what lies ahead for it on its path to finding itself.” This amounts to a completion of the dialectic for it

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15 Heraclitus, in Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*—Fragments of the Presocratics, Berlin 1903, fragment B2.

comprehends *outer* and *inner* as well as the *and* joining them, while taking the relation of mental to external world itself as dialectical. Non-dialectical philosophising always proceeds on the assumption that either the outside world or internal thinking is independently identical. Dialectical philosophising understands both as relata of a relation in which the 'identical' is the relatedness of the two in their difference. The goal of this dynamic condition of relating is the self-recognition of the one within the other, the identity within the difference, the hovering of absolute reflexivity, in which 'being free' and 'letting be' coincide. One can say, certainly in very external terms, that achieving this hovering is a question of philosophical culture, so long at least as this is not understood to suggest that the matter is an arbitrary one. The point is to let philosophy speak, to give voice to the self-consciousness of the *animal rationale*, to let it be.

Specific implications of dialectical thinking, including Hegel's infamous supposed 'approval' of contradiction, will be discussed in the main text itself. In fact the contradiction, which, as we know since Zeno's, but also since Kant's, antinomies is always in the world, asks for no-one's acceptance or approval. The principle of avoidance (obviously implying the *presence*) of contradiction is in fact about privileging the principle of identity. Not the contradiction but the principle of identity, which first enters the world through the power of thought, should be questioned as to its acceptability, at least as the supreme and abstract yardstick against which everything in the world is to be assessed. For with this yardstick in hand the world is still being cheated of its depth, projected in reduced dimensions onto planar schemata, with the claim that these schemata are to the world: identical! In the chapters on reflection in the *Science of Logic* Hegel shows that identity's idealism prevents its principle from even formulating itself in words without recourse to the principle of difference, much less getting anything done without it. Identity is only identifiable through the power of non-identity; this is especially true of its common version as an *imperative*, in which form it concedes that what confronts us initially as reality is the non-identical. This is how identity leads directly to the contradiction, which is why, according to Hegel, contradiction can be taken as the criterion of existence for real, in contrast to formal, matters.<sup>16</sup> Hegel never regards the contradiction as the last word on which to rest one's

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16 Cf. Hegel's observation in the *Encyclopaedia* § 48 Remark, "If reason is ultimately reduced to that *empty identity* . . . , then it is in the end happily freed from the above contradiction by the easy sacrifice of all content and import", translation by Brinkmann and Dahlstrom, p. 94. The tendency to measure the rational science of philosophy by the standards of formal systems is essentially the inclination to bid philosophy farewell.

laurels. Zeno's understanding of motion, for example, or Kant's of totality as mere contradiction represent abbreviations, formalisations and amount essentially just to picking points out of a continuous whole that needs to be comprehended in its full extension, a whole that has to be grasped as the manifestation of a *self*. It is the contradictions of a life *ad intra* as well as *ad extra*, far more than the shadows of consistency a biography may cast that bring the subject of the biography to life. It is the whole process comprising bud, bloom, fruit and new plant, not the taxonomy entry in the textbook, which defines what the rose is. It is the whole history of man, the story of his highs and lows, of his reason and irrationality, that delimits the space within which his logical location is to be found. One thing is certain, a time that has no idea how to write Platonic dialogues or to compose Petrarch's *Il Canzoniere* or Bach's *Art of the Fugue*, a time to which ultimate human potentialities are quite foreign, should not consider itself as the perfect subject for, the perfect horizon in which to encompass, a complete picture of the human condition. The painfully obvious contradiction between the world of the Parthenon and that at the opening of the third millennium is a provocation to find the common horizon, and within this possibly also the common *telos*, of what is clearly unreconciled between them—something which can never succeed without relativising our own starting point too. The horizon of a biography, of an organic system of development and circulation, of a historical process is in the last instance always the *self*, the *idea* in each case, which is not an abstract image, but a generative totality, understood, for all its negativity, also as a positive emergent unity. Dialectic is then, briefly put, the science of the unfolding of what is self-like, a “science of the self” and just for that reason not a science of a something, nor of a something other, but of that concrete ‘and’ standing between ‘something’ and ‘other’, which, as the location of the contradiction, is clearly more than merely a conjunction. It is the generative kernel of a totality, which Hegel can call, among other things, the *concrete universal*. As we have seen, there is no unproblematic access to this concrete universal that can lay bare *ideas* (like life, the I, history and spirit) or the self as such; indeed, there can be no such easy access, because dialectic is not a matter of disposing over something, but a participation in logical life. There is no instrument case that can contain the breath of that life. The obvious implication here is that we can demand of Hegel, as of any other dialectician, that he again and again throughout all of his philosophising bring things to light that would *not be visible* except through philosophical dialectic. There is a philosophical practical proof, from which the dialectician is not exempted, and which consists in bringing logical nodal points to light that can give unexpected new orientation to the pathways of thought. Philosophy is very far from being about correcting the use of language. It is the opening up of language,

breaking new ground in language, or at least offering more realistic language capable of directly facing the challenges of the dialogue with what has already been said. More, philosophy is here what lights up that surplus of which the non-philosophical attitude to the world takes no account, although the surplus stands firmly in relation to that view of the world, not in another world beside it. The dialectical surplus points to the coherences and consistencies that lie ahead of non-philosophical thinking, which it needs but which as instances of totality always remain beyond it. The programme of the dialectic is thus to realise the totality—to the extent at least that the totality is capable of being realised at all in the here and now.

## 2.4 Logocentrism

The fundamental meaning of the Greek word *logos* is “relation” and that of the related verb (λέγειν, *legein*) “to gather”. Since Heraclitus the *logos* of the philosophers means the gathering of the many in *relation* and in that towards the one; it is the actual bringing into relation “towards the one” (πρὸς ἓν, *pros hen*), as Aristotle says, in terms of language and of thought, within and without. It is from the *logos*, not from calculation (*logismos*), that the basic current of philosophy in Europe is a *logical* one; this is the current that Hegel, by restoring logic as the fundamental discipline of philosophy, has brought once again to the forefront, but which remains in need of explanation, for the expression “logical” is used in many and diverse meanings. In recent times—and this is in fact not a new complaint—the concept of the logical has been reduced to a programme rationality purged of essential aspects of the logical in its original sense. What has been lost is not only in most general terms the great range in which, in Greek thought, the *logos* appears: as language and meaning, concept and thought, proportion and law. What has been lost is the knowledge that the *logos* comprehends form *and* content and that a formal logic, the beginnings of which certainly lie with Aristotle, can only be an amputated version leaving the logic of the content as well as that of the relation between content and form aside as open questions. This is what leaves logic helpless in the face of all sorts of the most naïve ontological claims. Lost is also, finally, the aspect of the self-activity of the logical collecting, which as such is never an external construct to be forced on the matter. The *logos* is free. In the Greek sense it is responded to by the *homology*, the agreement and concordance, the “yes” to what is consistent and harmonious and to what is revealed therein. This is why dialectic leads to what is consistent beyond the individual categorial claim; it is about finding the way into the *logos*, which is never merely somebody’s claim. Dialectic is the free answer to the free *logos*, which has to proceed tentatively to be effective in each individual case.

The orientation of European thought to the logos, which Hegel too affirms, is today no longer welcomed by everyone. The talk of logocentrism originated in the philosophy of life (L. Klages) and later, while retaining many parallels to this origin, was independently revived in post-structuralism (J. Derrida). It proceeds from the standard of modern Cartesian rationality and sees this logos as the opponent of life suppressing the “graphematic” difference, as the oppressor of the absolute other opposed to it. It struggles against the philosophy of consciousness and that of identity, opposing the domination of the flat understanding and the principle of identity. Clearly, dialectically speaking there are good reasons for this opposition. But it also turns against principles as such, against all thought that starts from ‘governing’ and hence ‘first’ principles (ἀρχαί, *archai*). Its strategy is to demonstrate the cracks and frictions in the homogeneous picture of the thoroughly rationalised world and to offer alternatives, if not in fact *the* alternative. The common element with the dialectic referred to above is that it is always possible against the immediate and identical *one* to bring arguments from the *many*.<sup>17</sup> In marked contrast to post-structuralism however, dialectic does not *insist* on multiplicity; it does not hold fast to it, but lets it, just like its opposite, disappear in the consistency, in the harmony that is its desired terminus. Post-structuralism’s critique of logocentrism is relatively recent, but it still relies on the perennial advocacy of otherness, which is, constantly repeated, just for that reason not radical enough. No transformation of the other is permitted here, a becoming other of the other is simply not allowed; it merely *fixes* that other in the meaning of ‘being other’. As such this critique knows nothing of the dialectical ascent to surplus, to totality. It stays stuck in the horizontal dimension of variations pushed on and on to exhaustion. As, one could say, a philosophy of identity with inverted polarity, it cannot hold the attention of the dialectic for very long.

Dialectical thinking begins, as already mentioned, with self-relating as such, which is at once differentiating and uniting. Dialectic is the knowledge of difference as relation, even if in the immediacy of difference the relation can remain completely hidden. Things that differ also relate to each other and, conversely, only those that do not relate to each other do not differ. For this reason each difference is just as productive as it is constructive, even if not in the same way from the standpoints of the different relata themselves, but certainly in the perspective of their totality. The logocentrism critique against this is the ‘truth’ and ‘domination’ (to the extent that one can still speak of the two together) of the *absence of relation*. Thought through to the end, it leads consistently (again to the extent that it still makes sense to demand

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17 Cf. e.g. Zeno, in Diels-Kranz, fragment B3.

‘consistency’ here), into that silence ‘deconstructing’ language, which Plato describes in the first part of the *Theaetetus* as the result of a Heraclitean view of everything in motion, or an abstract assertion of multiplicity.<sup>18</sup> It leads to the death not only of the subject but also of the concept, which alone can be the truly ‘decentred’ and completely ‘varied’ logos. And in all that it leads to an abstract otherworldliness, a loss of relation to the world, which then only has any reality as a product of reflection.

The dialectical beginning in differing as such, in the logical oscillation, is also not the start in a centre as a pre-established focus. It is the beginning with a differentiated *medius terminus* that negates itself into the dialectical result. The contradiction always overcomes itself; it produces a relation *made explicit* that is the *exhibition* of the totality of the logos or of the self. No finger can point to this *showing* and therein lies indeed a certain defencelessness of philosophy against abstraction. Hegel sees in this weakness a strength. It is the defencelessness of the (dialectical) “patience of the concept” that cannot use the force of the matter itself immediately to compel anything or anyone. In the end it is this patience that lies at the heart of the logos; it has today perhaps more than ever before become a foreign body in our intellectual habitat.

## 2.5 *Philosophy in Its Own Time*

From Hegel we have the well-known saying that “philosophy is its own time grasped in thought.”<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that philosophy is the kind of diagnosis of its time that competes with options flourishing in our time like social science or trend research, not to mention opinion poll analysis or even journalism. Conversely, the term diagnosis of the times makes no claim actually to grasp an epoch in thought in the sense of bringing out its intelligible content. Diagnosis of the times would be rather itself a function of its time and hence guided by what seems plausible in that time, by axiologies and totalising perspectives, all of which must themselves be debated within philosophy. Such analysis is the attempt of a given epoch to make its time into its own object, to define itself objectively and from that to draw specific conclusions for action. What Hegel is looking for is something quite different. Philosophy is the place where an epoch—without reference to the goals of action, without taking aim at that kind of objectivity—*gives expression to its own genuine self-consciousness*. Philosophies, at least those of real standing, are like the textbooks of whole epochs, not like diaries written by observers. Thus, there

<sup>18</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, especially 181b–186d.

<sup>19</sup> Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Vorrede*—Preface (GW XIV/1, 15). This work is commonly referred to as the *Philosophie des Rechts*—*Philosophy of Right*.

is nothing of the throw away comment when one says that in Plato we find expressed the world of the Greeks, in Thomas Aquinas, the medieval world, or in Nietzsche, the epoch of nihilism. Hegel himself demanded of his own philosophy that it stand in alert contemporaneity with his time. Again this does not mean that philosophy in some sort of foregrounding provides images of what is happening around it. Neither are the realities outside it somehow more compelling than philosophy, which would then be reduced to little more than the commentary on all that. Hegel's observation means that every distinct epoch has a logical centre, which is as such manifest only philosophically. In this claim there lies some serious provocations along with the attendant irritations.

The first fundamentally provocative claim lies in Hegel's correlation of philosophy with time, which is intended to be thoroughly anti-metaphysical while referring directly to philosophy's claim to truth. Hegel's assertion would not be possible on the foundation of Platonic or Aristotelian metaphysics and most certainly not on that of Descartes; today's 'analytical' ontologies, which all still aim at a truth independent of time, also make the claim impossible. According to Aristotle, to take him as an example, the first philosophy, metaphysics, considers being as such and in that it liberates us in ethical terms from entanglements in our times. Even Kant and Fichte stand for a concept of philosophy whose centre is occupied by the timelessness of transcendental acts. Now Hegel is not trying to replace what is persistent with what is changeable, eternal truths with everyday interests. Such a reversal would not amount to much of a critique of metaphysics; it would be no more than setting out an opposing position to it that could hardly avoid the flat taste of the banal. The point of it all, the real provocation lies in Hegel's claim that an epoch as such can be *grasped in thought* and thus can be *made intelligible*. An epoch is then not the accidental or contingent, the bad singulars that simply accumulate on the surface of what is essential, distracting from it and providing no serious insight into it. A time is rather as such *reason in its presence*. No longer confined to ideas, substances and eternal laws, Hegel sees the logos encompassing time too. Kant took a decisive step in this direction when he made time not merely a pure form of perception, but also a "form of the inner sense" and with that also a universal schema of objective determination. In this sense time had already become logically transparent with Kant. Hegel's insight, however, is not a matter of the transparency of specific historical epochs in their respective individual profiles. The claim, which ultimately also includes a farewell to the Kantian Archimedian point of the 'I think' as a timelessly static form, is based on the assumption of a specific philosophical structure that is solely Hegel's

own, namely his philosophy of spirit, specifically the philosophy of objective spirit.<sup>20</sup> Thus, there is no coincidence to the fact that his statement that philosophy is its time grasped in thought stands in his *Philosophy of Right*—the most important of his contributions to the theory of objective spirit, to spirit that has become objective, sensuous, external reality and is engaging and compelling as such. That time takes on specific shape as objective spirit makes it also *knowable*. It is already in itself known in the historical course of events as also in their legal texture, the actualities of constitutions, which form the real stuff of history. Beyond that it is also for us transparent in what is expressed by philosophy, which is not so much a message from a transcendent sphere, for now philosophy knows precisely how to express itself as the concept of *our own* given contemporary reality. In every real philosophy there lies something that directly addresses its contemporaries; something that also expresses their innermost essence, that clarifies their knowledge. One may be justified in finding in Descartes' philosophy, for instance, the précis of the early modern period, but this does not mean that reading Descartes became the efficient cause of a specific style of thinking in the make-up of early modernity. The point is that this style achieved inner clarity nowhere else than in the work of the great Frenchman, that in its light whole centuries become effortlessly recognisable. Clearly, a man like Descartes was not interested in diagnosing his times. But it is just as clear that what he had to say did not simply fall *into* one epoch; rather, it was interwoven with it in such a way that it could provide the key to its time. According to the metaphysical view Descartes would in the best case have uttered the truth according to which his time, again in the best case, should then have oriented itself. Hegel's view is that in the context of his time Descartes formulated what was a—here as everywhere else—temporal truth, which was simultaneously the truth of his epoch as its concentrated concept. *Truth* is not the pathway out of time, but into it. Truth is about honing in on the axis on which a time turns, the explication of the mediation from which it lives. In this sense there is in Hegel, as once again the *Phenomenology* will show us, a plurality of truths, which dialectically is bound up with the fact that truth too is not a 'something', but a *relation* and thus intrinsically plural. No abdication of reason to a blind time is intended here; the power of reason can see beyond the times, in the strict sense that reason can do that only *in* the given epoch, only through the labour in and on its own time.

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20 Only Giambattista Vico can be considered as a forerunner to Hegel in this matter; his doctrine of the *mondo civile*, the civil world, can be understood as a concept of objective spirit.

Hegel's statement then from the *Philosophy of Right*, "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" depends directly upon this interweaving of time and reason. The actuality of reason does not stop at the gateway to the time dimension, on the contrary: a reason that remained the impotent other of time would not be worthy of the name. On the other hand, of course, anything "in time" is not simply for that set on the throne of reason. Hegel's insight does, however, mean that reason can only be normative if it is in time, illuminating it from within. Again the distinction between reason and unreason is to be drawn within time, for the actual reality of reason is nothing *in abstracto*, but only in the here and now. Hegel recognises that the abstract category *time* has its origin in nature, not in logic. Only the spirit as nature logically overcome renders time concrete in a form of reason. Spirit distinguishes between rational and irrational time, thus, for instance, between human history and the course of nature, between human action and the course of events, but also between the rational and the irrational, between free and unfree will. Spirit draws distinctions simply by being *itself temporal*, but not in an external theory. It is through such distinctions that it knows what is "really actual", i.e. what is rational and what is not. Really actual is reason manifested in time, it is spirit itself not 'thrown' into time; spirit actually making and transforming time itself into a structure of reason. It is in this sense, and in no other, that Hegel then typically stipulates that the *Philosophy of Right* should not "construct a *state as it should be*" but should "comprehend . . . *that which is*".<sup>21</sup> It is without doubt more difficult to think of reason actually embedded in time (then always reason in contradiction) than to draft clear, imperturbable realms of reason on the drawing board. The general complaint against Hegel that he believes it is easier to call what is accommodating to time rational rather than what is unaccommodating to it, at least if directed at his philosophy, misses this point and would be, as *ad hominem* questioning of Hegel's integrity, something to be examined historically with respect to concrete situations. Everything else can only concern the question as to what extent Hegel succeeded in making *his* distinction between the rational and the irrational in his time plausible to other times—and if not, then measured against what kind of reason?

## 2.6 *The Absolute*

Hegel's concepts of philosophy and truth bound to time in the ways described above appear to stand in tension with the fact that his philosophy not only does not avoid the concept of the absolute, but places it at the centre of interest. This concept is his logically unavoidable place holder for totality, and as

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<sup>21</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, *ibid.*

strongly as Hegel's philosophy addresses the need to explain what totality is, no less is it always also the explication of the absolute. In fact, however, there really is no irresolvable contradiction in the tension between temporality and absoluteness as benchmarks of philosophical thinking. What we have here is rather the process of thinking through to the end the embeddedness of reason and knowing in the process of their coming to themselves, of their completion in the here and now. Philosophy does not become concrete this side of an as such untouchable and inexpressible absolute; instead it is the entering of the absolute, of totality, into time; it is their embodiment. A style of thinking that sees itself as nothing more than a transitory covering of a content, which ultimately remains concealed by that thinking itself, stands for Hegel on the level of essence, not on that of the liberated concept that proves its own truth. Essential thinking establishes a fixed difference as the framework within which the absolute is supposed to be one of two correlated polar extremes, the second extreme being the reflection of the non-absolute, which makes it a non-absolute reflection. Under these conditions the absolute is clearly *not* absolute right from the start, because it is not capable of reaching out to the other side, not able to reveal itself therein.

Two exit strategies are, broadly speaking, available for escaping from essential thinking. The so-called metaphysical approach, which ultimately claims to be always immediately one with the absolute and believes it knows the truth about the phenomena because it has the absolute as corrective. Scepticism, on the other hand, knows *ex negativo* at least enough to know that whatever appears in phenomenal form is most certainly *not* the absolute, but only an 'untruth'. Heidegger's revival of the opposition of metaphysics and nihilism is in a certain sense, i.e. in the framework of the thinking of essence, perennial and unavoidable. Ultimately, however, it only falls away when, with Hegel, one does not think of the phenomenal present within time as the presence of substitutes for the absolute, but as the presence of the absolute itself, which in that sense certainly does not always lose or deny itself in time, but on the contrary finds and completes itself therein. Here again not everything in appearance has the blessing of the absolute simply because it appears; no object of nature has it, for instance, for nature always points to something else and does not complete itself in itself. But an absolute completely incapable of individuation in time would be *eo ipso* an abstract benchmark in the play of the non-absolute and would belong only to that game. It would not be *absolutely absolute*.

The absolute is literally that which is released from all relations, existing purely *for itself*, which suggests the view that this separated something is also separated ('absolved') from all relations of knowledge and thus must be unknowable. Hegel's absolute, in contrast, is definitely knowable; indeed,

ultimately it comes down to knowledge itself. It is an integral moment of the logical movement and is present within this; Hegel called the logical terms in the *Encyclopaedia* the “definitions of the absolute”, indeed “the *metaphysical definitions of God*.”<sup>22</sup> The absolute has in this sense an extension equivalent to that of the philosophical movement itself; thus philosophy is in each of its manifestations the presence of the absolute and one can just as well say conversely, that the absolute is that from which one cannot depart unless philosophy ceases to be—philosophy! Clearly, what we have here is a non-objective concept of the absolute. It is no *être suprême* in an inaccessible place, as it is in no sense any species of being, much less something that *is* only at specific places. Identical with (true) knowing, with the self-mediating relation, the absolute is firstly the medium of philosophy itself, not a kind of task it is set. The same applies, and this is perhaps more easily understandable, also for the other forms of the *absolute spirit* (namely art and religion), as Hegel calls the modes of lending the absolute presence. Thus, for example, art, which also does not simply grapple with the absolute as a task, but actually creates real spaces of absoluteness, spaces that no longer refer to anything external to them, which are as if pacified, thereby actually giving existence to the ultimate goals of human life and knowing. Art, which only happens where no additional external utility and value is involved and where, more than a discursive depiction, a model of free existence is seen to endow it with a meaning accessible to every being endowed with freedom; as such art is according to Hegel the *sensuous* mode of manifestation of the absolute. A real history of art, a gallery of absolutes is in no way excluded by this. The romantic view that what art in truth has to express is that *blue flower* it never has and never will attain is for Hegel the complete despair of art, only to be countered by knowledge of its true concept and through experience of its actuality. In the same sense then in which the absolute of art has a reality in time, just so is the truth of religion’s absolute, as that of philosophy, one of already *having arrived* in time. Religion in the form of the Christian doctrine of incarnation, as Hegel’s philosophy of religion will emphasise, declares for itself that the absolute is not something merely transcendent, distant and sublime, some alien principle, but that it is capable of having been born by a woman and of stepping out onto the stage of a time fulfilled by that absolute itself. That religion knows this occurrence as also an act of reconciliation only goes to show that it has here passed over from the unreconciled to the absolute *absolute*. Philosophy is finally the specific awareness that on the basis of knowledge too such fulfilled time is at any time

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22 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 85.

possible, as it always was actual in the history of philosophy. Just as Hegel's totality concept does not aim at omniscience, so his concept of the absolute as known by philosophy does not aim at any kind of technical perfection of knowing. Its focus is the strict self-reference of the relation of knowing with nothing more to distract it outside of itself, thereby achieving an intensity of which a simple, objectively oriented (and already in that *relative*) consciousness is fundamentally incapable. Fichte bound the primary knowledge of this intensive absolute, which also constitutes the foundation of the move into external relations, to the form of subjective self-relation. The two elements in the content of the I as basic forms of intelligible self-possession are *knowing* and *freedom* and as such primary instances not of objects and objective relations, but purely of original factors and in this sense absolutes. Hegel then takes a step beyond Fichte when he refrains from binding the presence of the absolute primarily to the subjectively accessed immediacy of that presence. In the *Science of Logic*, the absolute is *self-showing*, pure manifestation from which the relations of showing have fallen away: the absolute is clear and *plain* not as something to someone, but clarity as such—it is that which nobody can *explain* to somebody else who does not yet know of it, for that somebody already refers to it if he *understands* at all. Absolute understanding has already eliminated the distinctions between inside and outside, between in-itself and for-me making it the natural starting point for dialectically developing the intelligible cosmos. That cosmos is found in those moments where reason and actuality coincide, as they do already in the elementary understanding of understanding (which obviously does not mean the possession of an elaborate epistemology, but of an elementary precondition for cognition). Their coincidence is thoroughly within time, understood as the self-localising of spirit in relation to nature and natural relations, a *contingent* moment, which is surprisingly the pinnacle of the absolutely necessary consolidation of knowing with itself. It is, in terms of the relations of nature, always *contingent* when and also if a child first grasps itself as a subject and can give the sound 'I' an infinite significance. What happens in this way within time is the absolutely necessary ground-laying of a world and history of spirit, without which there can be no relations of nature that could be sensibly called contingent. All philosophy is then the concrete incorporation of the absolute within time, the incorporation of the return of knowing into itself in its own ground-laying from out of which a world of spirit and a history of freedom can emerge. Hegel believes that the nodal points of the history of knowledge then certainly have their dialectic, so that none of them may claim in an abstract sense to be the last or the end of history. It is just that the dialectical participation in a history of the absolute constitutes no objection to the absolute sense of each and every one of the participants—

as little as the existence of another's freedom is any objection to that of one's own.

The absolute is thus not only the ground and starting point, but also goal and inner measure of Hegel's concept of philosophy, but again this does not simply release philosophy from the concrete constellations in which it stands, which are of course also historically conditioned. Hegel did not tie the philosophical knot for all time, leaving only repetition for later generations. If the word denotes the claim of philosophy to constitute through the power of thought actually fulfilled time, in the sense of being *within* its time as well as simultaneously already over and beyond it, without either simply leaping over or sanctifying it, then clearly its impulse is not to be satisfied with simply knowing what has already been the case in the past. There is every reason to believe that, even two hundred years after Hegel, we can learn a great deal from him if we take this impulse seriously.

**PART 1**

*Early Writings and Jena Debut*





## School, Seminary, System Programme

### 1 Zealous Pupil

Great thinkers do not really debut in lecture halls but, like the rest of us, in baptism and birth registers. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born on 27 August 1770 in Stuttgart the eldest son of Georg Ludwig Hegel, a financial secretary at the court of the duke of Württemberg, and Maria Magdalena Hegel, née Fromme. The family was descended in the father's line from Protestants in Carinthia in what is now Austria, who left their homes at the end of the sixteenth century under the pressure of the Counterreformation and settled in Württemberg. Hegel lost his mother in 1783 and his father died in 1799. His parents sent Hegel at the age of five to the *Latin School*, at that time a sort of elementary or junior school, and then at seven to the *Gymnasium Illustre* in Stuttgart, now the Eberhard Ludwig gymnasium.

A series of documents remains from Hegel's gymnasium years that give us a surprisingly detailed picture of him as a pupil. At 14 he wrote a short fictional historical dialogue, based on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, between the Roman triumvirs Antonius, Octavius and Lepidus, in which the feigned friendship each character adopts with respect to their former allies gradually crumbles in the face of the real intention of the later Augustus: *aut Caesar, aut nihil*—emperor or nothing!<sup>1</sup> Hegel kept a diary during his school years and from 29 July 1785 he wrote it in Latin; the shift from German into the language of scholarship was motivated, as the fourteen year old explains, “*exercendi styli et roboris acquirendi causa*”—to exercise style and become stronger (in the language).<sup>2</sup> From the diaries it is clear that Hegel sought closer contact with his teachers as he liked to turn walks with them into private lessons; that he went to the ducal library to study there; and that he took the discussion of the intellectual mood of the times, such as the dominant superstitions, very seriously. In one of his essays he discussed the “Religion of the Greeks and Romans” and in another progress in the pursuit of knowledge; the excerpts he made on education, philosophy and theology and other subjects were often taken from new publications;

1 Hegel, *Unterredung unter Dreien*—Conversation of three, GW 1, 39. English translation by Christiane Seiler in *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart, Evanston 2002.

2 Hegel, *Tagebuch*—diary, 1785, GW 1, 13.

Hegel sought to draw out connections to the intellectual developments of his own time. An insight into Hegel's development can perhaps best be provided by a list of books he bought on 5 July 1785 recorded in his diary: Aristotle's *Ethics*, Demosthenes *On the Crown*, all of the works of Isocrates, Cicero's philosophical works, the *Attic nights* of Gellius, works by the historians Velleius Paterculus and Diodorus Siculus as well as writings of Plautus, Catullus, Albius Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius and other later Latin authors.<sup>3</sup> Hegel's interests in his school days were by no means confined to the humanities; he studied mathematics and the natural sciences assiduously. It is no exaggeration to say that the first image we have of Hegel in his youth displays a clearly universal orientation to the widest possible horizons of knowledge.

With this extensive preparation behind him Hegel entered the university of Tübingen in the winter semester 1788/9. In a *vita* that has survived Hegel says he decided on theology following "the wish of his parents" and adds, "I... was happy to remain true to the study of theology because of the links to classical literature and philosophy".<sup>4</sup> He clearly never really had the intention of becoming a minister; he saw theology as a kind of concave mirror in which the most diverse disciplines could be focused and brought together. The system of university education of the time required two years of study in the philosophical faculty before beginning the specialist study of theology; Hegel completed that initial two-year study with the degree of *Magister*. Then he moved into the Tübingen seminary, which is where that memorable friendship between Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling occurred. The three shared a room together for a time and entered into a kind of secret union, a spiritual brotherhood with the motto ἓν καὶ πᾶν, *hen kai pan*—one and all or all-encompassing unity, and which is emphatically re-asserted in the letter Hegel wrote to Schelling in 1795 that ends with the words, "God's kingdom shall come, and our hands do not remain idle in our laps!"<sup>5</sup>

During his university years, as indeed later too, Hegel was rather aloof and awkward; his nicknames included "*hölzerner* (wooden) Hegel" and the "old

3 Hegel, *ibid.*, GW I, 7.

4 *Eigenhändiger Lebenslauf Hegels (Entwurf)*—Handwritten *curriculum vitae* (draft), in *Briefe*—Letters v. IV/1, p. 89. Volume IV of the *Briefe* contains "documents and materials on the biography" of Hegel, none of which is included in Butler and Seiler's translation of only the letters written by Hegel himself, the reference to which follows immediately below in the next note.

5 *Briefe von und an Hegel*—Letters from and to Hegel, ed. J. Hoffmeister in 4 vols., Hamburg 1952, v. I, p. 18. Cf. English translation of only Hegel's letters in one volume, *Hegel: The Letters* by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, Bloomington 1984, p. 32.

man", although he held his drink well and was persuaded to break the rules in the strictly ordered life of the seminary on some occasions. He even joined a political club that espoused the ideals of the French revolution, which was investigated by the government, although in the end the duke of Württemberg preferred not to pursue the members. Hegel passed the theological examination in 1793 after giving some not very inspired sermons and decided on a path taken by Hölderlin and many other university graduates of his time: he became a private tutor. In the *curriculum vitae* already mentioned Hegel explains his decision to work as a private tutor first in Bern, Switzerland, and then in Frankfurt, that being "free" from the "actual occupational tasks" of a minister, it would offer him sufficient leisure to "devote himself to ancient literature and to philosophy." He writes further that he has made "science" the "vocation of his life". He achieved much in those years studying and questioning the current events of the times and developing his thinking to maturity.

## 2      **Threefold Interest**

This is a good point to take a closer look at the spiritual and intellectual environment Hegel grew up in and which he had to respond to. We can distinguish three decisive components that always functioned in concert and cannot be understood independently of each other. First we have the philosophical sea change in Germany emanating from Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), which gave rise to rapid expansion in philosophy at the end of the eighteenth century brimming, as it was, with a sense of a new beginning. Hegel was first exposed to Kantian ideas at the *Gymnasium Illustre* and, although he did not react as enthusiastically as Schelling did to Kant himself and to his successor Fichte, Kant remained an important reference point for Hegel throughout his work and was indeed the man he saw as forming the "foundation and the starting point for recent German philosophy".<sup>6</sup> Secondly we have the *political* upheaval initiated by the French revolution. Hegel was one of those young people who were very receptive to its ideals and he soon began to think about how one could apply these ideals to the German empire at that time. The third factor is the crisis in *religion*, which Hegel encountered at the latest during his theology studies. The crisis caused him and his friends, Schelling and Hölderlin, to question how religion in their time might change and find somehow higher or deeper bonds of feeling given the state of the "common ethical essence", as Kant called the church. According to the three friends, religion in its ideal

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6 Hegel, *Science of Logic* (1812), GW XI, 31 fn.

form had once actually existed in ancient Greece. Does there really exist such a thing as a supra-individual spirit, a whole that does not rape the individual, but rather, in the sense of the identity of totality and individuality, gives individuals the sounding board they need in order freely to express themselves? Does such a thing exist under the conditions of the new enlightened rationality and on the the ground of subjectivity? Can it exist in the face of “calculation”, the “thinking that has forgotten being”, as Heidegger called it? Is it possible under the conditions of the domination of the logical, which, as Hölderlin put it, has already subjugated the primary, chaotic life force, what the poet called the *aorgian*?<sup>7</sup> And was it not precisely the task of religion to hold the logical and the alogical in the life of the people, the subjective and the substantial, thought and life together? We shall soon find this topic in Hegel’s early theological writings assuming considerable importance in showing right from the start how wrong it would be to regard Hegel at his entry into philosophical debate simply as a follower of Kant. All three components of his times—the new beginning in philosophy, political renewal, and the interest in the possibility of regaining a genuinely religious dimension—constitute issues that will continue to concern Hegel, becoming concrete in the discussion of the *philosophy of the I*, in giving rise to a *philosophy of history*, and finally in inspiring a *philosophy of absolute spirit*. We shall soon see in the so-called *Oldest system programme of German idealism* of 1796/7 the same kind of triad, here flowing into the question of a “new mythology”. In Hegel’s mature system we encounter the spheres of subjective, objective and absolute spirit, each with its own very specific structure of presence. In terms of the history of ideas one can refer all three theme groups to the Enlightenment; at least an Enlightenment that is clearly on the point of self-realisation in that it is no longer merely a programme directed against established ways of thinking, but has become the load-bearing foundation itself, the given; an Enlightenment, that is, not confined to criticism, but which has something affirmative to show for itself.

In terms of the three areas named above that last sentence effectively characterises the position held in Hegel’s youth by Kant. Hegel always regarded Kant as having made a new beginning, founding philosophy anew, and even if he later made some pretty harsh criticisms of Kant, ultimately he agrees with Kant’s own assessment of himself, that with the transcendental philosophy, with the *critique*, Kant achieved a “Copernican turn”, a veritable “revolution in the way thinking” and that it was no longer possible to go back behind it without rejecting the new level of reason that had been attained. Kant’s

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7 Cf. Hölderlin, *Grund zum Empedokles*—Ground for Empedocles, Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe, Stuttgart 1961, 4/1, 152 f.

revolution in thinking consists in no longer taking the starting point for philosophy from what apparently or actually *is* and instead starting with the nature of our subjective relation to this *being*. In Kant we find, taken at face value, what is the very extraordinary claim that actual reality is not what simply “is there”, so that in the pursuit of knowledge all we would have to do would be to turn to it. Instead Kant sees actuality as a *modality*, merely one manner in which we assert and formulate things. Kant attacked the view that one can easily picture or represent an assumed external reality in thought as dogmatism, opposing it with the critique that inquires into the prior subjective conditions of the possibility of cognition. What Kant is saying here—to put it already in Hegelian categories—is that not the immediate, but the mediate is what is true or, as one might say, the world does not consist of objects but of subjects so that objectivity is something that can only really be understood from the position of the subjects and, indeed, must be understood from that position. The pursuit of knowledge is thus not about running after that which is somehow given as such prior to and outside of knowledge; indeed, Kant believes that there is no possibility of knowing the things as such or *in themselves*. Knowledge itself participates in ensuring that for us there exist specific things at all, moreover we ourselves participate in determining what things, and things of what kind, exist for us. Cognition participates in two ways, with the two subjective forms of intuition, space and time, and secondly with Kant’s twelve categories which thought deploys in order to give logical form to what appears to it in space and time and render it definite, determinate. While things in themselves are thus unknowable for us, our thinking forms the sphere of appearance under the categories, reshaping it as it were into an external world as an objective unity in which thinking or the “I think”, the “transcendental apperception” can operate. That transcendental apperception of the *I think* is the formal identity of consciousness and for Kant the fulcrum of the possible identity of objects as such. Scientifically organised objectivity is, according to Kant, always a matter of a world of maximal possible subjective identity and maximal consistency of thought; it is a world subservient to the form dictates of our thinking and its categorially determinant interventions. In this world then we are not confronted, as naïve realism believes, with things, themselves conveniently formed to make them knowable; instead it is a world in which we have already invested the decisive factor in advance. The specific world, the one in which we live, is for Kant very much a colony of our thinking, and the more this world is scientifically interpreted, the more it becomes nothing more than a colony. Kant rejects the notion that man is purely receptive and innocent and, simply by opening his eyes, forms an image of an idyll of the world on the *tabula rasa* of his soul. Objects in the world, and how much more so the objects of

what is popularly called the “true” world, i.e. the world of the sciences, are in this external or scientific specificity naturally *thought* objects and certainly not simply matters of nature. Ignoring all this, that everything appearing in thought stems from thinking itself, Kant regards as dogmatic thinking, which wants to give the things there before us priority even though it is our thinking itself that has cleared the way for them. At the end of the chapter on the “Supreme principle of all synthetic judgments” of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant gives the famous formula that sums all this up: “the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience”.<sup>8</sup> With this statement Kant gave the impulse to that tendency in German idealism known as the I-philosophy, which through authors like Karl Leonhard Reinhold and above all Johann Gottlieb Fichte very soon reached the students of the Tübingen seminary and captured their imaginations. Hegel followed these developments attentively but, especially in comparison to Schelling or Hölderlin, who himself attended Fichte’s lectures in Jena, with some diffidence preferring to adopt a wait and see attitude. Later he will recognise an important step forward in this line of thought from Kant’s transcendental apperception to Fichte’s philosophy and to Schelling’s *The I as the Principle of Philosophy*, but also a one-sidedness, one of his responses to which will be his philosophy of spirit. At this point in his early development however Kant’s practical philosophy is more important to him and it contains a stronger dose of what one can call the “spirit of the colonisation of the world” than Kant’s theoretical philosophy. Kant’s practical philosophy is concerned with the construction of a world of freedom according to laws of freedom or according to duties incumbent upon every being endowed with reason, every being that is which itself makes the claim to be endowed with reason. In contrast to the field of theoretical philosophy there is no presumed material here that would have to be first formed. Freedom is rather “self-creating”; it produces its objectivity completely out of itself even when it comes into confrontation with other rational beings, who ethically have to be treated as themselves free beings. With his practical philosophy Kant had already transcended theoretical objectivity as what is merely objective. Fichte and Schelling took their impulse here to found the new philosophy totally on the practical dimension. Again, Hegel is more cautious, although he shares the enthusiasm for Kant’s practical philosophy and experiments, as we shall see presently, with particular applications of this philosophy in politics and in religion.

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8 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge 1998, B 197, A 158.

The second great upheaval, the French revolution, which happened just a couple of months before Hegel's nineteenth birthday, could hardly have failed to leave traces on his intellectual development. It immediately posed the question as to just how seriously the new concept of practice was to be taken. In his *Conflict of the Faculties* Kant called the revolution a "historical sign" (*signum rememorativum*), enabling the "demonstration" of something important about the "tendency of the human race as a whole, i.e. not considered in terms of the individuals . . . , but rather as it is divided into peoples and states on the earth". In this it is not the events of the revolution itself he has in mind, but rather the astonishing sympathetic support this upheaval aroused spontaneously and enthusiastically among the "spectators", despite all the atrocities associated with it.<sup>9</sup> Far more than Kant, it was Fichte who in his early writings assumed the role of the advocate of the revolution. One conclusion Fichte drew from the revolution was that all forms of statehood should be abolished and replaced by a free-floating realm of reason—an ideal that Fichte, even as he very soon moved beyond such simplistic thinking, never really abandoned. This distinguishes him from Hegel, who later founded a theory of the irreducibility of the state to feeling, to morality or even to society. Briefly then, Kant, Fichte and the young Hegel saw in the French revolution the victory of the concept of participation over that of representation. Rousseau's political philosophy can serve best to clarify this here. Rousseau saw in the conditions of the *ancien régime* the alienation of the citizen from the state and the political and legal system in the sense that state and system related to the citizen only externally, institutionally. The absolutist state—one thinks of Versailles—with its myriad political ranks and distinctions, indeed in terms of the whole system of public, symbolic choreography of statehood, represented itself no doubt with respect to all, but, as Rousseau sees it, it did that without enabling the citizens to find themselves in this state, to find real expression of their true interests within this choreography, let alone expressing the general will of the human race. Against this, the revolution seemed to offer the promise that now the participation of the individual could emerge in place of the representation of the universal; a process which, by the way, exhibits many inner parallels to Kant's demand to replace the dogmatic commitment to a representational faculty with the consciousness of our responsibility for the objective world. Be that as it may, Hegel too regarded the traditional political forms as no longer vital

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9 Kant, *Streit der Fakultäten*—Conflict of the Faculties, AA VII, 84 f. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, translated by Mary J. Gregor, New York 1979, p. 151 f. Ms Gregor's parallel edition includes the original of the Akademie (AA) edition as printed, i.e. in Gothic script and with the same pagination.

and living. They drove men into division with themselves, while the revolution seemed to propose a new unity of man with himself as well as of men among themselves and with this unity came freedom, stripping away arbitrary barriers to freedom, like class privilege, which no longer seemed to make any sense. Many years later Hegel says looking back in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* in the section on “Enlightenment and Revolution”, “It was this—the French revolution—a glorious sunrise. All thinking beings celebrated this epoch together. A sublime emotion dominated that time, an enthusiasm of spirit rippled through the world as if it had finally come to the actual reconciliation of the divine with the world.” (TW 12, 529; cf. J. Sibree’s translation *The Philosophy of History—Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*, 1857, p. 467) Hegel was seeking then in his youth to understand *philosophically* just exactly what had happened. In those later lectures he goes on to say that “the thought, the concept of right suddenly in that moment established itself” (ibid.). Hegel continues in this vane and says that the revolution had long since been brought into relation with philosophy and that it could only have happened on the basis of a certain constellation of mind and spirit. He says it could never have happened “in the forests of Germany” and can also not be compared to the constitutional development in North America, which according to Hegel required comparatively rough conditions—he speaks of the “most unbridled licence in all matters of the imagination” in North America.<sup>10</sup> The French revolution required a much higher standard of culture and the existence of advanced concepts of right and law and of philosophy too. The revolution posed the question of the constitution and it created—according to Hegel for the first time in history—a constitution no longer based on power and traditional legal relations, but wholly conceived from thought, from the *concept*. The *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* once again, “As long as the sun stood in the firmament and the planets orbited around it nothing like this had ever been seen, that man would stand on his head, i.e. on his thoughts and construct a reality according to these. Anaxagoras was the first to state that νοῦς, *nous*, rules the world; now men have at last come to know that thought should govern the world of the spirit and the mind” (ibid.). Hegel felt that in principle reason had become reality, reason realised itself in the revolution. Needless to say, Hegel was not fooled by any subjective feelings, not by the terror of virtue that soon raised its ugly head in the domination of abstraction, what he called “the most

10 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*—Lectures on the philosophy of history, TW 12, 113. English translation by H.B. Nisbet in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction: Reason in History* by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Cambridge 1975, p. 168; cf. Sibree, *ibid.*, p. 103.

horrific tyranny”; nor did he try to whitewash it in any way, on the contrary, Hegel was one of the first to offer a thorough diagnosis of this form of the ‘dialectic of enlightenment’, this reversal of reason into ideology, of law into caprice. Hegel distinguished between the genuine rational content of the revolution, which he accords persisting world-historical significance, from the ‘formalism’ of the revolution, in which it threatens to deprive itself of that rational content. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* he says that it is “a false principle” to seek “a revolution without a reformation”, by which he means that an overthrow of political relations not based on an already completed “liberation of conscience” (TW 12, 535; cf. Sibree *ibid.*, p. 473) ensuring that the individual is recognised and respected, can only end up betraying itself. Hegel’s own political ideal will thus always be a political whole, a common world of the individuals in which they can find themselves as free individuals. This is another application of the principle already mentioned, that totalisation and individualisation should not exclude each other, but that properly understood the one is only to be had together with the other. The universal and the individual constitute for Hegel not an exclusive, but a relative opposition, just as the world ‘I’ designates me as an individual being and can simultaneously be used by all other individual human beings—this was of course Kant’s decisive reference. This two-sidedness forms the vital basis on which a common world can be constructed by myself and the other I’s.

The third component of the the young Hegel’s intellectual and spiritual environment we have to consider briefly is the question of religion or, put somewhat more emphatically, how are we to understand the human condition from the absolute, how can man be certain of himself in the absolute? This question relates directly to the Kantian critique, since one of the negative results of Kant’s theoretical philosophy was that in terms of the new objectivity there cannot be an objective concept of God. God is for Kant an idea of reason; simply making use of our reason leads us necessarily to this idea; but God is not the kind of thought that can be given objective reality within theoretical thinking. To attempt this would come down to foraging around in the murky realms of the “thing in itself”, to which all access is denied us. Nevertheless, Kant did speak of a practical certainty of the existence of God. For the realm of freedom we construct with our actions subject to the moral law has for its originator not man as merely a being equipped with organs of sense perception, but man as a being endowed with freedom. *Homo noumenon* is Kant’s term for this and as such in our behaviour we operate beyond the empirical realm and understand ourselves to be inhabitants of an intellectual world containing within itself something like a teleological tendency to seek reconciliation with that life conducted in the world of the senses. As an ideal, this reconciliation is

the ideal of a “kingdom of God” or a “realm of purposes”. Ultimately only God can find a balance between the conflicting tendencies of the world of sense and the world of freedom, only from the “standpoint of God” is it conceivable that, for instance, the blind causality of nature taking its objective course could be harmonised with free and rational action, which represents a very different sort of causality, or even that the two could ultimately come together. Since, however, we act as if nature and the world of the senses are ultimately congruent with all rational action, this means that we tacitly assume that there is a God holding both sides together—indeed, we do this even when this coming together is not obvious to us at all.

This, very briefly, is Kant’s moral or “ethical-theological” argument for the existence of God. Hegel was confronted with this kind of thinking in his theology studies in Tübingen. Gottlob Christian Storr (1746–1805) and especially Johann Friedrich Flatt (1759–1821) among his theology teachers belonged to a movement seeking to overcome the crisis of theology and religion of the eighteenth century, which was certainly not caused by Kant alone, with Kantian means, above all with the help of his ethics and its doctrine of postulates. Just a short reference to the crisis of theology here: the Protestant theology Hegel studied was broader in scope and far more open to new intellectual developments than the much more closed system of Catholic theology, which relied instead on its rich metaphysical tradition. One can even say that Protestant theology was almost helplessly exposed to those new developments. According to the Reformation principle *sola scriptura*—only the text, Protestant theology was founded centrally on the Bible as the normative, authoritative text. In the age of Enlightenment there was a shift in reading habits with respect to this normative text, for it was no longer seen as a source of revelation, but simply as a book like any other and hence subject to the methods of philological and historical critique. A prominent example of the new attitude and its results is the so-called ‘fragment conflict’. This broke out in the years after 1777 resulting from historical and critical investigations of the Enlightenment philosopher and theologian Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), which were published by Lessing, and led to very heated debate. Reimarus questioned the claim at least of the Old Testament to be revelation at all; he rejected the reports of miracles in the Bible and interpreted Jesus’ resurrection as the theft of the corpse by his disciples. Reimarus was not alone in offering a critique of this sort, but the theologians were faced with some serious difficulties in defending the Bible as an essential authority and foundation for an entire discipline. Two points are interesting for us here which were significant for Hegel’s further development. First was the attempt that Hegel learned of in Tübingen to use Kant’s practical philosophy to establish theology on a new foundation. Then there is the

emergence of his own awareness of a problem that will occupy him for a very long time: how do historical positivity and the claim to reason relate to each other? What does it mean exactly that religion, more generally philosophy, and in fact all thinking have a positive side, that they have an aspect of historically factual existence in which they, theology and philosophy, show themselves to be finite, perhaps even terminally finite? Lessing famously said, "Contingent historical truths can never provide the proof of the necessary truths of reason,"<sup>11</sup> a statement from which the well-known consequences were drawn in *Nathan the Wise*, "So aren't all of them [i.e. the religions] founded on history? Written or oral!"<sup>12</sup> Hegel will go on to discuss these questions for the first time extensively in his early theological writings. In our discussion of these texts we will encounter a problem important also for the later philosopher of history: what does it make of reason to be thought of not as standing timelessly above the course of things, but as entering into history itself? How is this possible? And is this, if it happens, for the content of reason merely a matter of external accoutrements or does it have more to do with its realisation, with reason itself, than one might initially believe? Must we think of reason as such as historical, of reason generating itself within given external circumstances? We know that answering this question with a 'yes' can very quickly lead to all sorts of historical constructions, of which the Marxist variety was not the least harmless. What does this make of so-called necessary historical truths? The issue includes the problem of the transparency of human affairs as well as that of a possible penetration of historical existence by reason. In Italy Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) had already discovered the historical world as the one most closely related to man. To the north, this discovery only started with Herder, who was soon followed by Hegel.

Now let us return to the Tübingen lecture hall, where Kant's ethical philosophy was being deployed to rescue theology. The three young friends Hegel, Schelling and Hölderlin were all outraged by this procedure. Just a short example here; on 6 January 1795 Schelling wrote from Tübingen to Hegel, who had been living in Bern, Switzerland, since October 1793:

The truth is that they [i.e. the Tübingen theologians] have extracted some ingredients of the Kantian system (only from the surface, of course), from which now as if *ex machina* powerful philosophical brews on any

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11 Lessing, *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*—On the proof of the spirit and of force (1777), *Sämtliche Schriften*—Complete writings, v. 13, Leipzig 1897, p. 5. Cf. Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, translated by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge 2005, p. 85.

12 Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*, act III, scene 7 (vv. 1975 f.).

theological topic whatsoever can be cooked up, so that theology, which was beginning to get frantic, would soon be able to emerge healthier and stronger than ever. All sorts of dogmas have been declared postulates of practical reason and where theoretical or historical proofs were never sufficient, now practical (Tübingen) reason breaks the knot. It is ecstasy to watch the triumph of these philosophical heroes. The times of philosophical melancholy, about which so much has been written, are now over!<sup>13</sup>

Hegel replied at the end of January 1795:

What you say about the theological-Kantian (please God) course of philosophy in Tübingen is not surprising. The orthodoxy is not to be shaken so long as its profession is tied to secular advantages and woven into the structure of the state. . . . If this troop were to read something contrary to the views of which they claim to be convinced (if one can really do them the honour of calling their word-shuffling that) and were actually to feel some truth therein they would say, 'Yes, well, that is true', then they'd go to bed and drink their coffee next morning with their companions as if nothing had happened. At any rate they put up with whatever is offered them and what they acquire in their sloppy system. But I think it would be interesting as much as possible to disturb those theologians, who gather critical construction material to shore up their Gothic temple with their ant-like industriousness, to make everything difficult for them, to whip them out of every corner in which they seek excuses until no more are to be found and they would have to show their nakedness before the light of day. In all that construction material they take from the Kantian funeral pyre to hinder the conflagration of dogmatics they also bring burning coals back home; they bring the general dissemination of philosophical ideas.<sup>14</sup>

The twenty-four-year-old's harsh judgment of the clumsy attempts of his teachers to master the crisis in theology—for which Hegel holds Kant and his critique of dogmatic thinking primarily responsible—can only be properly understood when one recalls that for Hegel as for his friends Schelling and Hölderlin religion as such was in no way *passé*. The letter just quoted is the same one with the so-called covenant formula, the motto already quoted above: "God's kingdom

<sup>13</sup> Schelling to Hegel, no. 7 in Hegel, *Briefe* I, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Hegel to Schelling, *Briefe* v. I, no. 8, p. 16 f. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 31.

shall come, and our hands do not remain idle in our laps!" And then a little later, "Reason and freedom remain our bywords and our point of union the invisible church".<sup>15</sup> It was the trio Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling who even in Tübingen wanted to bring about the return of religion, that "invisible church"; they wanted to see the return of the absolute itself in the midst of the upheaval then under way in philosophy as well as on the political and historical levels. These three wanted to speak the word in a new "matter-of-fact phraseology"<sup>16</sup> in a manner of thinking and speaking from the standpoint of totality, which meant initially from the standpoint of a genuine and comprehensive feeling. Subject and object, but also subject and subject, should no longer be seen as external to each other; instead they must stand together in a highest community, a spiritual unity and communion in which they become *one single* actuality. This is where Spinoza comes in. Lessing had recommended him as a support in the face of the rationality destroying religion. Schelling especially devoted a lot of time and energy to studying Spinoza's pantheistic philosophy and sought to reconcile it with the new foundation for philosophy in the I. In fact, with or without Spinoza, the Tübingen friends struggled for a long time with the task they had set themselves of finding linguistic expression for a living whole that is something inexpressible at the highest point in philosophy. In one of Hölderlin's *Diotima* poems we find,

Ha! where no power on earth  
 No hand-wave of God separates us,  
 Where we become one and all,  
 Only there is my element;  
 Where we forget necessity and time,  
 And the miserable profit  
 Never measuring with the margin,  
 There, there I say, there I am.<sup>17</sup>

This is only one of many examples of the search for the ἐν καὶ πάν, *hen kai pan*, the "one and all" they dedicated themselves to in Tübingen. They could no longer find it in the traditional forms of religion and theology and now they felt that it must find new expression in language, whether in poetry or in

15 Ibid., p. 18. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 31.

16 Hegel, *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal*—The spirit of Christianity and its fate, TW 1, 372; Nohl *ibid.*, p. 305. Knox' translation in *G.W.F. Hegel: Early Theological Writings*, London 1940, p. 255.

17 Hölderlin, *Diotima*, Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe 1/1, Stuttgart 1946, 219.

philosophy. Of course, this is all initially just a programme, more need than satisfaction, and it is still highly experimental. Nevertheless, the contours become clear, at least looking back from its outcome, as the new thinking on the basis of Kant's philosophical revolution and the political revolution in France and in Europe responds to the desire to prepare a new presence for the absolute.

### 3 *Oldest System Programme*

This short but very significant text is written in Hegel's handwriting, although the only thing we know for certain is that it is a product of the circle of the three Tübingen seminarists. No final decision on the author's identity is possible but it is not really likely that Hegel is the author. The *Oldest system programme of German idealism* was published by Franz Rosenzweig in 1917.<sup>18</sup> Rosenzweig, who first recognised Hegel's handwriting, believed despite the handwriting that Hegel could not be the author; others have argued for Schelling and some for Hölderlin. In the 1960s Otto Pöggeler favoured Hegel with the argument that the text exhibited enough Hegelian turns of phrase from the years 1796/7 to justify assigning it to him.<sup>19</sup> Still, Pöggeler also believes that the text would have been written at least in parts under the influence of Hölderlin, which would date it to 1797, the year in which Hegel moved from Bern to Frankfurt to take up a new private tutor job and returned to closer contact with Hölderlin. At any rate the document is very significant because it contains the first wide-ranging if brief outline of a system, besides including some bold statements which, in the philosophical landscape of the time, were not at all obvious.

The fragment begins with the notice that "metaphysics as a whole will in future be a part of moral philosophy". We read this against the background of the Kantian critique, which, as we have seen, cuts off the theoretical pathway to the metaphysical objects *soul*, *world* and *God*, only to reintroduce the existence of God and the immortality of the soul via the postulates of practical reason insisting upon a "primacy of the practical", a project undertaken with tremendous energy by Fichte well before this text was written. That remark is immediately followed by the observation that in this area Kant had "exhausted nothing" and that the project of grounding a "complete system of all ideas"

<sup>18</sup> Hegel, TW 1, 234–236.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Otto Pöggeler, *Hegel, der Verfasser des ältesten Systemprogramms des deutschen Idealismus*—Hegel, the author of the *Oldest system programme of German idealism*, in H.-G. Gadamer ed. *Hegel-Tage*—Hegel conference, Urbino 1965 (*Hegel-Studien* supplement 4), Bonn 1969, 17–32.

on the basis of ethics remained to be accomplished. “On the basis of ethics” here means above all on the basis of freedom. This is why the system of ideas should begin with the “notion of myself as an absolutely free being”. The direct connection to the I-philosophy founded by Fichte, which Schelling had already extended towards the absoluteness or unconditionality of the I might suggest Schelling as the author rather than the others. Then we read, “With the free, self-conscious being emerges a whole world—out of nothing.” For Fichte the thought *I* also asserts the thought *not-I*; a well-defined possession of self precedes possession of a world even if in that the I sets itself against the world. The world appears, according to the principles of the I-philosophy (which, it should be stressed, are not necessarily Hegel’s) only within the horizons of the I—not the other way round; the converse, setting the I as dependent upon the world would be dogmatic thinking of the kind Kant had rendered obsolete. Once this is clear, that the world is a “creation” of the I, then the author of the *System programme* can confidently proceed to say “now I will descend into the fields of physics”—oddly physics comes here not merely after but immediately *from out of* ethics and—again thoroughly in the spirit of Fichte’s practical philosophy—“the question is this: How must a world be constructed for a moral being?” This is not the kind of question we normally expect physics to answer, but it reminds us that the impulse to freedom remains effective here in all considerations of the external world, just as every action tacitly assumes a specific ‘cosmology’ enabling it to achieve its goal in this world and hence that the world can be formed according to the aims of action. The author even promises that we “at last in this way get physics on the grand scale”, a physics then that does not collect and order the “data” of “experience” for its own sake, but subordinates them to the great leading ideas of philosophy. Schelling will go on to develop these proposals extensively in his philosophy of nature.

After physics come the political and historical spheres; here we find the statement that “there is no idea of the state, because the state is something mechanical. . . . Only something that is an object of freedom bears the name idea. So we have to go beyond the state!” This strictly negative perspective which, as already mentioned, will be seen later by Hegel in very different terms, was continued in the proposed “Principles for a history of humanity”, for in that “the whole sorry construction of state, constitution, government and legislation should be exposed down to its nakedness”. The demand is instead “absolute freedom for all beings who bear the intellectual world within them and who may not seek God or immortality outside themselves”.

Full of youthful exuberance, this draft manifesto appears up to this point to be aiming at a thoroughly new anarchism of reason, throwing physics as well as all political structures into disorder. One thinks of the encounter between

the student who has just passed his baccalaureate and Mephistopheles, styling himself as an old scholar, in the second part of *Faust*, in which Goethe caricatures the I-philosophy in the words of the student as follows.

This is youth's noblest profession!  
 The world was not 'til I created it;  
 The sun did I bring up out of the sea;  
 With me began the moon its course of changes  
 ...  
 Who but I freed you from all bonds  
 Of cramped, philistine thought?  
 I, then, free as the voice of my spirit,  
 Following joyfully my inner light  
 Moving fast in the purest delight  
 Darkness behind; before me, all bright!

In response to this speech Mephisto ups the ante:

Original! Move forth in your own splendour!  
 How could insight upset your plans:  
 Who can then utter foolishness or cleverness  
 The world before has not already thought?<sup>20</sup>

But our *Programme* does not persist in this negative mood; the second half makes a remarkable turn. First it talks of the idea “which unites everything”, that is of the religious ideal of the “invisible church” or the highest community, which we have already encountered, but now this ideal is called “the idea of beauty”. Kant spoke of beauty as a free end in itself in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, a book in which he went furthest towards the limits of the power of unification in the philosophy of reflection. Now, even if Kant does stand in the background, it is rather Plato, the author of the *Symposium* and of the *Phaedrus*, our author has in mind. Beauty should “be taken in the higher Platonic sense”. This remark is understandably often taken as an indication of Hölderlin's contribution to the *System programme*. Hölderlin was not only an enthusiastic reader of Plato since his time in Tübingen, he lived the better life, his inner life, through the force of his poetic imagination to a great extent not simply in Greece, but specifically in the environment of “the students of Plato”. This was the imagined society in which, as Hölderlin recorded in July 1793, he “followed with his eyes the flight of the sublime one [i.e. Plato] as he proceeded

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20 Goethe, *Faust* II, 2nd act, scene 1, vv. 6793–6810.

through the dark far off places of the primeval world", following "him into the depths of the depths, into the farthest ends of the land of spirits, where the soul of the world sends its life into the thousand pulses of nature" and where he "heard the sounds of cheerful Socratic friendship at the symposium of the enthusiastic youths" and then believes, with his *Hyperion*, still "to be able to bring some contribution to the happiness of mankind . . . into the light of day".<sup>21</sup> The author of the *System programme* states the justification for placing the Platonic conception of beauty at the highest point of philosophy as follows, he is "convinced that the highest act of reason, that in which it comprehends all ideas, is an aesthetic act and that truth and goodness are just siblings within beauty." This is why "the philosopher must also possess the aesthetic power of a poet. Our literal-minded philosophers are people without aesthetic sense. The philosophy of spirit is an aesthetic philosophy." That inexpressible they sought, the one-and-all, now has a name, the beautiful, and the destructive work of *critical* reason ultimately has the significance of making room for beauty. Here again we have to say that this is not the last word on the matter, at least not for Hegel. Schelling brings one of his early works, the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800, to culmination in the philosophy of art and he aims, like the author of the *System programme*, at a "new mythology", which alone, according to him, can constitute "the mediator of a return of science to poetry".<sup>22</sup> The author of the *Programme* says of himself that he is the first to think of demanding a "new mythology" and even of a "mythology of reason". In this mythology emerging from poetry, the highest form of language available to us, reason, indeed, meaning itself will become sensual and that is what will make it possible to reach the people. "Unless we make the ideas aesthetic, i.e. mythological, the people will have no interest in them". Then again, even the philosopher needs mythology, he needs the "sensual religion"; it is basically the "polytheism of the power of imagination" that stands beside the "monotheism of reason and of the heart". In the end the people and its philosophers will be able to reach out their hands to one another. "Then eternal unity will reign among us. . . . Then at last the equal development of all powers awaits us, in the individuals as well as those of all individuals together. . . . Then will reign universal freedom and equality of all beings endowed with mind and spirit! —A higher spirit, sent from heaven, must found this new religion among us, it will be the last and greatest work of humanity."

21 Hölderlin, Letter to Neuffer, Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe 6/1, Stuttgart 1954, 86.

22 Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, ww vol. II, p. 629. Cf. the English translation by Peter Heath in *F.W.J. Schelling, System of Transcendental Idealism*, Charlottsville 1978, which includes the page numbers of the first edition of Schelling's works of 1856–61 issued by his son K.F.A. Schelling also used in Schröter's ww edition, p. 232.

The reference to the “higher spirit, sent from heaven”, who is supposed to found the new mythology is certainly not superfluous. In itself the notion of creating a new mythology includes the problem that here something supposed to have immediate validity must also first be mediated in order to establish it; and, of course, there are very good reasons for regarding established, not to say artificially constructed ‘mythologies’ with the greatest scepticism. It is highly questionable whether the path that has already been traversed from myth to logos can easily be reversed. Nevertheless, perhaps the most interesting aspect of this fragment is that while it begins with a great pathos of reason and with ethics, it ends with reason becoming sensual. With this a start, at least, was made on a problem that will grow in significance for philosophy after Kant, the problem of how reason communicates itself without ceasing to be reason. This question raises issues that for instance Schiller tries to deploy against Kant. In the case of Hegel we shall soon find in various contexts the insight that for us reason in fact already has a sensual aspect built-in as it were; it is for us as *language* present within the language. Reason possesses a concrete existence within the language and raises us through language to itself. In comparison to the bold suggestion of a “new mythology”, this sounds at first rather modest and it certainly does not completely fulfil the demand made at the conclusion of the *System programme*. But it is an indication of one of the central aspects in which Hegel has already gone beyond Kant: Hegel here, as Bruno Liebrucks might say, could justifiably be understood as a philosopher whose “thinking proceeds from language”.

# Hegel's Apocrypha

## 1 A Rediscovery

The term *Jugendschriften*—writings of youth, is used to refer to a series of texts and fragments produced during Hegel's years as student and private tutor from the period 1793 to 1800 which he did not himself publish. In 1801 Hegel moved to Jena with the help of Schelling, published his first book, took his habilitation and began his academic career. The *Jugendschriften* were first published by Hermann Nohl in 1907.<sup>1</sup> Nohl was a student of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), the advocate of the philosophy of life and of hermeneutics, who is also important as one of the founders of historicism. Dilthey himself held the view that a philosophy is best described in terms of the history of its development and hence that the biography of a philosopher is often the key to his philosophy. In 1905 he published a work with the title *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels*—The history of the young Hegel,<sup>2</sup> which was based on the documents in the Royal Prussian Library in Berlin that Nohl published two years later. Dilthey's concern with Hegel's early works was thoroughly determined by his own philosophy. For instance, he found that Hegel's interest in the importance of biography to history was comparable to his own. Hegel had written a *Life of Jesus*, which means that Hegel tried, just as Dilthey did in the history of philosophy, to consider Jesus Christ not as a dogmatic 'object' of theology, but historically, as a matter for historical investigation. He even found a kind of pendant to his own philosophy of life; the concept of life certainly did play an important role in Hegel's early writings as one of the concepts designating that totality sought by the three Tübingen seminarists. Thirdly, tied to the concept of life, Dilthey found a pantheism in the young Hegel to which he was himself sympathetic, a kind of thinking that was not dogmatically fixed. Many of the readers of Hegel's early texts regard them with similar enthusiasm precisely because they show him in a very different perspective from the 'system philosopher'. Some interpreters even claim to have found an 'alternative Hegel' in this early period, someone

1 *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften nach den Handschriften der Kgl. Bibliothek in Berlin*, ed. Hermann Nohl, Tübingen 1907, reprint Frankfurt am Main 1991. T.M. Knox in *G.W.F. Hegel—Early Theological Writings*, London 1940 translates much but not all of this material.

2 W. Dilthey, *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels*—The history of the young Hegel, Berlin 1905, reprint Göttingen 1990.

with whom they would far rather have a convivial drink than the author of the works the philosopher actually published. Hegel's early texts are indeed written in a style that is far more accessible than most of the later writings, with the notable exception of the popular lectures in Berlin, especially those on history and art. The early writings display a rhetorical brilliance that becomes rare in those later works, so full as they are of the labour of the concept. Moreover, they handle the material in a way that is fresh and immediate, without being explicitly dialectical or indulging in serious methodological reflection.

Before turning to the writings individually a hermeneutic proviso must be made against the dominant tendency in the reception of this material, which is important to our orientation in the case of Hegel. He always considered very carefully the question of whether he should publish a text or not. He chided his friend Schelling with having "received his philosophical education in public";<sup>3</sup> but Hegel himself declined to publish, although the manuscripts were piling up already in the 1790s. In Jena he announced the forthcoming publication of his system virtually every single year without actually publishing it, although he was certainly not inactive. The Jena system drafts edited from Hegel's papers now fill three big volumes of the new *Gesammelte Werke* edition. Clearly, we have to proceed on the assumption that Hegel would not have wished to see his early writings published and that for our philosopher himself, these writings in no way represent a 'more authentic' Hegel than the books that made his name. Hegel would surely have said that in reading his works there can be no question of a more or less authentic Hegel, only of a more or less authentic philosophy. The fact is then that we encounter his philosophy in Hegel's early writings *in statu nascendi*, not yet in a mature form and not on the systematic level that would become the minimal benchmark for him later. That benchmark was first achieved in Hegel's publications in the early period in Jena beginning in 1801; and if one prefers stronger standards, then we should jump to the end of the period, for it is the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807 that offers the clearly stated, genuine Hegelian philosophy. So Hegel took his time and despite the fact that he had been declaring his intention to intervene in the philosophi-

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3 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*—Lectures on the history of philosophy, TW 20, 421, in the article on Schelling. The TW edition is based on the original edition of the Association of Friends, which was translated into English by E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson in three volumes, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, London 1892–6. It is freely available on the internet, e.g. on the website of the University of Idaho, unfortunately without page numbers, so the page numbers of the print version are given along with section and paragraph numbers. In this case; vol.III p.513; the article on Schelling at the end of volume III, part 3, D. ¶ 3.

cal discussions underway all around him since the middle of the 1790s, with hindsight we can see that this was no bad thing at all for his own philosophy. Despite the in some cases even euphoric response to the texts published by Nohl, one may doubt whether those unpublished early writings, then as now, would have raised anything more than moderate interest among specialists if they had not been written by the same Hegel who later emerged as an intellectual focus, even as the spokesman for thinking self-consciousness as such and for modern philosophy as a whole. This is not to say that the early writings do not raise weighty philosophical questions and even to some extent arrive at extraordinarily original answers—we shall soon find examples of that. But what they lack is that independent organising principle, the solid, comprehensive insight into the matter of philosophy itself, the presence of a penetrating logos that is more than programme, announcement or project. We shall see eventually that in the *System fragment* of 1800, the last text belonging to the corpus of the *Jugendschriften*, things start to clarify in the direction of such a logos so that the leap to the first publications is then not so great. Before that Hegel treads some pathways which, even if they are not completely foreign to his thinking, could easily have led him to quite different conclusions than those he ultimately came to espouse.

## 2 *Folk Religion and Christianity*

We shall now take a brief but serious look at the early theological writings and not only because they actually did cause quite a furore when they were published more than a century after they were written. The reader of these early writings enters into a strange world that offers many attractions and many surprising philosophical perspectives. The collection begins in the 1907 version with five fragments which Nohl gave the title *Volksreligion und Christentum*—*Folk religion and Christianity*.<sup>4</sup> These fragments actually go back to Tübingen times; they discuss, as Nohl's title indicates, the topic of religion. The first fragment begins with the rather tame statement, "Religion is one of the most important matters of our lives" (GW I, 83), and it seeks to determine what exactly the significance of religion is for us. Hegel is thinking here of Schiller's complaint against Kant's pure morality of reason we have already mentioned and his question was, if Kant is right in regarding man as an inhabitant of two

4 Hegel, GW I, 83–164; TW I, 9–104; Nohl pp. 1–71; the editions vary slightly in some details, but such differences as well as those of dating and chronological order can be ignored here. This text is not included in Knox' translation.

worlds, the intelligible and the sensual, and that his real ‘happiness’ resides only in the mediation, in the harmonic relation between the two worlds, then how does he really build the bridge between them? Hegel wants to build this bridge and his proposal, initially at least, clearly runs parallel to the ‘new mythology’ of the *Oldest system programme*. Hegel wants to build the bridge by harnessing the power of religion:

Just as precisely in a system of morality, pure morality must be separated from sensibility *in abstracto*, even if this subjugates the latter to the former—it is certainly no less important in considering man as such and his life to keep his sensibility in mind, his dependence on outer and inner nature—on that which surrounds him and in which he lives, including his sensuous inclinations and blind instincts—it is as if the nature of man were pregnant with the ideas of reason. (GW I, 84 f.; Nohl 4)

Hegel sees religion as the means of bringing these ideas of reason into the light of day; not immediately, by edifying people and giving them moral laws, but indirectly.

It lies in the concept of religion that it [is] not simply a science of God, of his characteristics and of our relation and that of the world to him . . . , not merely a historical knowledge or one based on the reasoning of the understanding, but that it interests the heart, that it has influence on our feelings and on the decisions of our will, partly when our duties and the laws receive a strong extra emphasis from the fact that they are presented to us as laws of God [a thought that surely comes from Kant’s philosophy of religion] and partly in that the notion of God’s sublimity and of his goodness to us fills our hearts with wonder and with feelings of humility and gratitude. (GW I, 85; Nohl 5).

This is the sense then in which religion aims to educate the people; it gives, as Hegel says, “a new and sublime impulse to morality and its motivations” (ibid.); religion motivates where mere understanding is not capable of doing so and this can be called a kind of midwife service provided to reason. Much later, in the preface to the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia* of 1827 we find this motif recurring in the following terms:

Religion is the kind of consciousness in which the truth exists for all human beings of all kinds of culture; scientific knowledge of the truth on

the other hand is a special kind of consciousness and the labour required is not undertaken by all, but only by very few.”<sup>5</sup>

Religion for Hegel is not a kind of opium, but rather a kind of philosophy or at least morality for the people, a perspective that Hegel shared with Kant. Fortunately, however, the twenty-three year-old does not stay with this concept of religion as a medium of transmitting ethics to the people, but soon comes up with the important distinction between “objective” and “subjective” religion (GW I, 87; Nohl 6). What does he mean by this? Augustine’s theology first drew the distinction, which gained new significance in the Reformation, between *fides quae creditur* (the faith in which one believes), the faith one ‘has’ in the creed, i.e. its content, and *fides qua creditur* (faith as belief), the faith one practices, the ‘formal’ faith; so we have the faith as a doctrinal system and then again faith as an act. Familiar to him from his theology studies, Hegel refers directly to this distinction to bring out the “subjective” religion, the genuine acceptance of the religious content in a life embodied in the practice of carrying it out. As Hegel puts it:

Objective religion can be ordered in one’s head, it can be brought into the form of a system, can be described in a book and presented to others in lectures and sermons; subjective religion expresses itself only in feelings and actions—if I say of a man he has religion, that does not mean that he has a lot of knowledge about it, it means that his heart feels the actions, the miracles, the nearness of God, he knows it and sees God in his nature and in the destinies of men. (GW I, 87; Nohl 6)

Moreover:

... everything depends on subjective religion—this has a genuinely true value ... When I speak of religion, then I abstract completely from all scientific or rather metaphysical knowledge of God, of our and that of the whole world’s relation to him ... And I only speak of objective religion to the extent that it is a component part of the subjective variety. (GW I, 89 f.; Nohl 8)

Hegel’s remarks are not especially spectacular when we consider them in the context of the time and the environment in which they were made. That

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5 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, Preface (1827), GW XX, 13. Cf. Brinkmann and Dahlstrom p. 15.

religion is a “matter of the heart” and not really a subject for reason was said long before by Pascal, who effected the displacement of religion into the realm of emotional matters typical of the modern period, indeed, it can also be found in Luther. Among Hegel’s contemporaries it will be writings just a few years after these from the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), to be discussed further below, who in his *Über die Religion—On Religion*, of 1799 again effects this displacement into feeling for romanticism, firmly establishing it as its paradigmatic concept of religion. For the young Hegel this new orientation in religion to feeling and emotion combines with his programme for a kind of people’s pedagogy; the understanding does not reach the actual grounds of action and the motivations of men, but religion does, which, as much as it speaks to the individual in his heart also has validity beyond the individual, forming an objective spirituality. This is the sense in which Hegel speaks of “people’s religion” and with that he does not only have the conditions of his time in mind, in which, as we have seen, religion is in crisis; he is also thinking of Greek religion.

The popular festivals of the Greeks were clearly all religious festivals, honouring a god or an individual who had served the state well and for that was treated like a god by the people—Everything, even the dissipation of the bacchants was sacred to a god—even their public theatrical performances had a religious origin—which in their later development they never denied. (GW I, 110; Nohl 26 f.)

It is the people’s religion in this sense that, as Hegel says, “produces great perspectives of mind and nourishes them” and goes “hand in hand with freedom” (GW I, 110; Nohl 27). These thoughts appear initially to derive from the search for a new and broadly effective pedagogy of reason, but later Hegel will develop them into the concept of objective, supra-individual spirit. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* we encounter the key term “spirit of the religious community” (GW IX, 298; Miller ¶ 549; cf. GW IX, 408; Miller ¶¶ 763–7), which Hegel, going beyond the I-philosophy of Fichte and of the young Schelling, begins to regard as an additional constitutive moment of subjective self-consciousness, bringing it out of its isolation. From Descartes to Kant self-consciousness was predominantly ‘monological’. Hegel turns it into a participant in a living world—more on this later. In the matter of religion, then, Hegel first takes it up as an enlightened calculus inspired by Kant in order to evoke reason through it, especially practical reason and the idea of freedom among men and in their hearts. The “enlightening understanding” then is exclusively assigned the role of “examining objective religion” in order to liberate the religious doctrinal sys-

tem, dogmatic theology, from superstition and from secondary issues leading away from the real aims of religion. But this does not achieve much; it does not yet mean “educating to great, strong attitudes, to noble feelings and to a determined independence” which Hegel sees as the goal of what he projects as a “bettering of men” (GW I, 99; Nohl 16). It is much more important to get beyond the merely doctrinal side of religion and connect with the real driving motivations of human action—and for the young Hegel that meant getting down into the “empirical character” of human beings (GW I, 101; Nohl 18). Against the background of the Kantian moral philosophy it should be noted that this is a rather bold assertion, for Kant taught that all action based on nothing other than the inclinations, feelings, even on “moral feeling” of an empirical character, have in ethical terms no value whatsoever. According to Kant’s maxims, action must be grounded in reason and nowhere else. My actions must prove that I am a rational being performing them in order to construct a world fit for beings similarly endowed with reason. Above we referred to the fact that Schiller objected to Kant’s ethics because it addresses exclusively that rational being, the *homo noumenon*; best known in this connection is the distich from the *Xenien*, which could even be said to have a hereditary claim to be quoted on this matter. Under the heading “Scruples of conscience” we read:

I’m happy to serve friends, but I do it unfortunately with inclination,  
And so it rankles with me often that I am not virtuous.

This scruple appears in the very next distich under the heading “Decision” in the following terms:

There is no other option, you have to try to despise it,  
And with abhorrence do as duty commands you.<sup>6</sup>

What Schiller then develops as a serious counterproposal is actually based, as is well known, partly on Kant, especially on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in which of course Kant himself tried to achieve the maximal accommodation of the sensuous and intelligible worlds and even to consider “beauty as a symbol of ethical life” (§ 59). The letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* is one of the works in which Schiller pursues a course starting from Kant but trying to correct him and Hegel endorses this undertaking with enthusiasm. In a letter to Schelling of 16 April 1795 he calls Schiller’s “Essay on the aesthetic

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6 Schiller, *Xenien* no. 388 f.

education of the human race . . . a masterpiece".<sup>7</sup> So Schiller tries to correct Kant in a way that really does not diminish Kant's ethics even if it certainly does open up a new dimension to the problem of the realisation of virtue and reason by referring to a "moral beauty" corresponding to morality in the narrower sense. "Beauty" as Schiller defines it in his *Aesthetic lectures* is "freedom in appearance";<sup>8</sup> it is the presence of what we are tasked with realising by morality on the level of the world of the senses into which, as it were, morality shines. Beauty is that rational actuality, fulfilled in a kind of premonition at least, that Kant promises in the doctrine of postulates.

So Hegel is following the direction given by Schiller when, for example, he refers to the "good inclinations" like "compassion, benevolence, friendship etc." and requires that the "moral feeling" should "send out . . . its delicate tendrils into the whole fabric" of the empirical character (GW 1, 101; Nohl 18). Here we have the context in which a very important word for the young Hegel appears and that word is "love".

The underlying principle of the empirical character is love, which has something analogous to reason in the sense that as love finds itself in the other or rather, forgetting itself, sets itself outside its own existence and as it were lives on in others, feels and is active therein—just so does reason, as a principle of universally valid laws, knows, recognises itself in every rational being as a citizen with them of an intelligible world" (ibid.).

Love is thus an empirical *analogon rationis*, a factor inside and outside of which the same structure as that of reason is found and, indeed, found on the level of the empirical man and his "good inclinations". When he wrote these words on love as an analogy of reason, Hegel could have had no idea that the moral law giver of Königsberg, that Kant himself in 1797 in the *Introduction* to the *Tugendlehre*—Doctrine of virtue, in his *Metaphysik der Sitten*—Metaphysics of morals, would place the "love of human beings" among the "aesthetic conceptual prerequisites for the receptivity of feeling to concepts of duty as such", as the title of section XII of the *Introduction* runs, if indeed with the precise position within the hierarchy of duty subordinating love as feeling to charity to others as the real duty. For Kant:

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<sup>7</sup> Hegel, *Briefe* v. I, no. 11, p. 25. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> Schiller, *Fragmente aus dem Ästhetischen Vorlesungen vom Winterhalbjahr 1792–93*, *Sämtliche Werke*—Fragments of the lectures on aesthetics in the winter semester 1792–93, Collected works vol. 5, Munich n.y., p. 549.

... the saying "you ought to *love* your neighbour as yourself" does not mean that you ought immediately (first) to love and (then) by means of this love do good. It means, rather, *do good* to your fellow human beings, and your beneficence will produce love of them (as a facility [*Fertigkeit*] with the inclination to beneficence in general) within you!"<sup>9</sup>

But Kant's hierarchy of duty and feeling serves a purpose the young Hegel does not share. He wants to "affect . . . the people" and thus initially recommends "taking them as they are and seeking all good instincts and feelings, by means of which, even if immediately their freedom is not increased, at least their nature can be elevated to nobility" (GW I, 101; Nohl 19). That is why it is necessary to connect with the heart and with the imagination, with fantasy, which should be "filled with pure images" by the popular religion. "Every religion that should be a people's religion must necessarily be so constituted that it addresses the heart and fantasy" (GW I, 107; Nohl 23)—this is how to reach subjective religion, that is one not merely concerned with theoretical concepts, but one full of *live* images and concepts.

Up to this point—the propagation of reason and especially of practical reason, i.e. ethics, by means of a lived religiosity—Hegel's ideas remain largely in the framework of Kant's philosophy, while the reliance on the aesthetic dimension clearly refers Schiller, but there soon emerges a motif which is his alone; it is the claim that a people's religion cannot achieve its goals in isolation, but rather has to be congruent with "political conditions". Hegel actually declares making "objective religion subjective" to be "the great task of the state" (GW I, 139; Nohl 49), which again means nothing other than that the living and lived reason is to be pursued in public and not in a private space. What he is proposing is almost a civil religion as a state goal. Hegel refers among other things to "how little objective religion on its own without corresponding support of state and government has actually achieved" (GW I, 127; Nohl 39). Elsewhere he describes the development of a "spirit of the people" as follows:

The father of this genius is Chronos, time, on which it remains all its life in a certain dependence (time constraints)—his mother: the πολιτεία, *politeia*, the constitution—his midwife, his wet nurse is religion, which includes . . . the fine arts as helpers of education." (GW I, 111; Nohl 27)

9 Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1797, *Tugendlehre*, AA VI, 402. Cf. the translation by Mary J. Gregor in The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1996, p. 530.

History, state, religion and the arts, only together do these constitute for the young Hegel that totality which, as we have said, will later be called “objective spirit”; only together do they ground the sphere in which real people actually live and which must be connected with by whoever, like Hegel in his youthful enlightened thirst for action, wants to be really effective.

### 3 *A Life of Jesus*

The first group of fragmentary writings is followed in the year 1795 by an extensive and carefully wrought *Life of Jesus*.<sup>10</sup> Hegel wrote a life of Jesus by paraphrasing and synthesising the four gospels, composing sermons, parables, disputations and prayers anew. The result is a unique text that we do not need to go into in detail. The important question here is: what on earth was Hegel up to entering the field on the borders between devotional literature, historical novel and ethical example book? Several lives of Jesus were in circulation in Hegel's time as products of theological rationalism and as a rule they pursue the goal of describing a Christ not of the dogmas, but one accessible to their enlightened readers in terms of an image that more or less mirrors them. In the fragments described above Hegel had written the statement inspired by Kant and rationalism, “The faith in Christ is the faith in a personified ideal” (GW I, 160; Nohl 67) The belief that pure morality, the *homo humanus*, has actually once appeared in space and time and thus does not belong exclusively to the intellectual world, shows that it is not the case, as Kant claimed in his *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*, that the question as to whether a completed action in fact was morally motivated must always remain undetermined.<sup>11</sup> Once the ideal became real then the logic of example justifies the demand that it should once again become real. So Hegel describes in his *Life of Jesus* the morality that has become actuality. This is why it has been said with justice that Hegel's Jesus is “the walking categorical imperative”. Jesus says for example in Hegel's version of the sermon on the mount:

Heaven and earth may pass away, but not the demands of the moral law, not the duty to obey it—whoever releases himself and others from following it is not worthy to be called a citizen of the kingdom of God . . . But

10 Hegel, GW I, 205–278; Nohl pp. 73–136, not in the Suhrkamp TW edition.

11 Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1785, AA IV, 406. Cf. Mary J. Gregor's translation *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge 1997 and 2011, which includes the Akademie (AA) edition page numbers.

what I add in order to fill out the whole system of laws, is the main condition that you not be satisfied with observing the letter of the law, which can alone be the concern of human judges, like the pharisees and the learned men of your people, but that you act in the spirit of the law and with respect for duty." (GW I, 210; Nohl 83)

Here Jesus teaches the Kantian distinction between legality and morality, between external agreement with the commandments of duty and an action that is purely motivated by duty. In the case of adultery, for example, it is not the act itself that constitutes the transgression, but the "inclination" that precedes it and which is not resisted in the spirit of upholding the moral law. Whoever gives way to inclination, even if it is "the most natural" and "loving" inclination, is already starting to let his "maxims gradually be buried and spoiled", even if he "does not transgress against the letter of the law in satisfying the inclination" (GW I, 210 f.; Nohl 83). On prayer Hegel writes, again putting it in Jesus' mouth in the sermon on the mount:

When you pray, that should not happen in the manner of the hypocrites, who do it on their knees in the churches or fold their hands in the streets or bother their neighbours with their singing in order in this way to be seen by the people—truly your prayer will not bear fruit. Your prayer, whether out in the open or in your room, is an elevation of your spirit above the petty goals men set themselves and beyond the desires that drive them hither and thither, through the thoughts of the holy that remind you of the law buried in your breast and fill you with respect for it untouchable by all the stimulations of inclination. (GW I, 218; Nohl 84)

One must concede that Hegel's Kantian image of Jesus does not seek to impose itself externally on the subject. The specific morality of Jesus and of Christianity is clearly significantly different from both the Jewish observance of law and the ancient ethics of *goods* so the idea of determining exactly what it is with Kantian means can certainly claim some plausibility for itself.

It has to be said, however, that the features making the story of Jesus in religious terms, in the Christian sense, into a story of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*)—even those to which Hegel will later return as central to his philosophy of religion—are not to be found here. Hegel's account lacks above all an independent sense of revelation beyond moral instruction; it lacks the doctrinal elements relating to the incarnation and to Jesus as the son of God; everything even remotely bordering on the miraculous, even the resurrection, is absent. All that remains is the central claim of the work in the opening sentence, "Pure

reason incapable of all barriers is the deity itself. The plan of the world as such is thus ordered according to reason" (GW I, 207; Nohl 75). This is a thesis on the identity of God with infinite, creative reason, which, however, in this form is less a statement on religion or even of confessional theology than a general assertion of philosophical theology in the spirit of Leibniz, Spinoza, Lessing or even Kant, but which does not really relate to positive religion. The account of the passion, of the sufferings and death of Jesus, is also given in these terms.

My father, the hour has come to show the spirit in its full dignity, for its origin lies in your infinity, and to return home to you! Its destiny is the eternity and elevation above all things that have a beginning and an end, above everything finite" (GW I, 268; Nohl 127).

Jesus dies in the end "peacefully composed", with "calm and dignity" (GW I, 278; Nohl 135)—even on the cross he remains a philosopher, still capable of distinguishing between finite and infinite. Philosophically speaking we have yet to make any progress beyond this distinction between finite and infinite nor in the task practically facing us of how to make infinite reason real and actual under finite conditions. Hegel was twenty-four years old when he wrote this text; the relatively abstract coordinates in which he still thinks—infinity and the finite, duty and inclination, ideal and actuality—do not suggest that there was very much to be gained on this path.

#### 4 *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*

A text that Hegel started working on immediately after his *Life of Jesus* makes a very different impression indeed. The published version we now have is a revised text produced in the year 1800 to which Nohl gave the title *Die Positivität der christlichen Religion*—*The positivity of the Christian religion*,<sup>12</sup> and it takes up an issue that will occupy Hegel throughout his career, the question namely of the historicity of the concepts, of the relation of the contingency of appearances to reason as it seeks and finds itself. At the start of the new version of the manuscript Hegel remarks that "the concept of the positivity of a religion...originated and became important only in recent times" (Nohl 139).

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<sup>12</sup> Hegel, GW I, 279–378; TW I, 104–229; Nohl pp. 137–240. Note that once again there is no perfect concordance between the German editions. Cf. Knox' translation *G.W.F. Hegel: Early Theological Writings*, pp. 67–181.

What should we then understand by the term “positive religion”? We need more detail here to answer this question.

The general understanding of the term ‘positive’ is that it refers affirmatively to something in any sense valuable or good; its opposite is the ‘negative’, something to be avoided or negated. Since the rise of positivism in the nineteenth century—a philosophy that confines thinking from beginning to end to what is empirically tangible—it became common to speak of ‘positive science’ in opposition to merely formal knowledge and to the commitment to universal and fundamental principles. The positive then became what is actually existing, underivable, simply given, that which we confront and simply have to accept. Against the reference to the ‘positivity’ of something, escape into mere concepts was no longer an option. In fact the simple history of the word and the concept ‘positive’ suggest something quite different. Positive comes from *positum*, which is the perfect passive participle of the Latin verb *ponere*—put, place, lay, set, which in turn corresponds to the Greek verb τίθημι, *tithemi*. In philosophy since its beginning among the ancient Greeks a ‘thesis’ is a statement, a position that one does not immediately take, but consciously ‘posits, asserts, claims, sets (up)’, which is then of course open to negation by any one else. Thus the positive is initially only something asserted, *made* or *set*, and this above all in distinction to that which is there ‘of itself’ or ‘by nature’ (φύσει, *physei*). In the sphere of law, for instance, positive law consists of the established laws and regulations set by a sovereign law-making authority. Natural law or rational law, in contrast, is law which in one way or another asserts itself as law *on its own*, which is understood by itself and does not need to be granted validity through some kind of legislative action. An example is what happens when I make somebody a promise. In doing so I concede to that person a ‘right’, even if it may never be possible for that person to enforce the claim in a court of law. An analogous distinction lies in the opposition of ‘natural’ and ‘positive’ religion as it came into use in the eighteenth century, above all through the enormous influence of Lessing’s essay *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*—The education of the human race, of 1780. It involves a clear displacement in aspects and values of the terms which is extremely important here. The traditional concept of ‘natural religion’ was that common to all human beings to the extent that they are capable of correctly using their reason; but this ‘natural religion’ had been superseded by a ‘revealed’ religion, whose qualitatively expanded religious content was now the decisive factor. The term ‘positive’ religion in the context of the Enlightenment, just like that of positive law, includes material asserted, set, made, or added by human beings. In the worst case—and in the opinion of the philosophers of the Enlightenment the worst case is the rule rather than the exception—natural

religion claiming to verify itself by reason is muddled and sullied rather than elevated, distorted rather than expanded by positive religion. This view regards what is natural and rational as the only inner measure and regulating standard of the positive; the positive is made by human beings and as such must justify itself before the tribunal of human reason and if it cannot do that, then it is excluded from religion as superstition or mere useless observance. These considerations led Lessing to the well-known conclusion that 'contingent historical truths' can have at best the pedagogical function of leading us to the truths of reason, but they do not possess any independent significance of their own. This means not only that historical additions are separated and held at a distance from a kernel of religion regarded as outside time; far more important is the return of the very ancient view, going back to Aristotle, that there is no science of the contingent, there is no universal knowledge of the singular and contingent and in this sense of what is individual. In the forum of reason, however, the religions must discard their historical accoutrements, i.e. everything based "on trust and faith" and not founded on "grounds".<sup>13</sup>

It turns out then that in common usage the 'positive' is in fact negative, while reason with its universal principles, reason that does not itself emerge immediately into appearance, is regarded as positive or 'normative'. A term of Hegel's from the later work can help here. Eventually he will set the notion of an *absolute negativity* at the centre of his philosophy; this absolute negativity is always something affirmative yet never simply positive in the sense of having been set or made. Totally the 'rationalist', Hegel will give priority to thinking, which is always a negating, over what is positively thought, what is set up, asserted by thought; he will remind us that the act of *positing* or *setting* itself has more power than what is actually set as a result, which is why for example humans may not seek to understand themselves positively, that is from the standpoint of what they themselves have set up. On the other hand Hegel will also say that thinking is certainly *capable* of positivity, that indeed far from shying away from its own contingent existence, only in that does it become *concrete*. Just how hot this issue was can be judged from the fact that at the end of the development of the philosophy of German idealism, at least for Schelling, the question of the relation between reason and history, between *relating* and *setting* remained open and ultimately unsolved. Schelling understood himself in his late lectures as the founder of a "positive philosophy". He maintained that the way Hegel does logic or the way he himself in his youth pursued transcendental philosophy certainly has its own value, but that it amounted to "merely" negative philosophy, remaining stuck in the realms of pale thought, against

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13 Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*, act III, scene 7 (lines 1974, 1977 f.)

which we have to rely on the positive, myth, revelation, history, the “unforeseeable”. This formed a prelude to subsequent developments in the history of positivism with, for instance, a decisive redefinition of the concept of actuality against the philosophical tradition. There had never been a philosophy of any stature that recognised simple immediacy, which is in fact posited or *set* immediacy (for instance the objectivity set by science), as ‘actual reality’ without more ado. The situation changed fundamentally with the emergence of the ‘positive philosophy’, with the rise of a ‘philosophy of existence’, for instance in Kierkegaard, and with Marx’ claim of intervening with philosophy into socially determined or set relations in order to reset them by creating a new actuality. Actuality is now something that steps outside of reason and becomes external to it; it may be unattainable by it (as in existentialism) or even something external to be first determined by it, as in Marx for instance. Against all this Hegel always insisted that actuality in the strong meaning of the term is not alien to reason, that it is part of reason’s destiny as well as of its work. This is precisely why the relation between reason and positivity, between actual reality and historical contingency had to occupy him. His fundamental position, as mentioned already, will later be that the concept is not only the inner organising principle of the matter, not only the ‘idea’, but simultaneously the principle of realisation of the matter in the sense of being that which makes it capable of positive existence. The concept for instance of a concrete person lies enclosed in the notion I, which initially is a completely universal relation in which no one I distinguishes itself from any other I. But then it is also true that only he who can say I of himself can have a story, a biography, which means to be capable of externally setting himself and becoming positive without thereby ceasing to be an I. The negativity, the self-relation does not exclude the external relation, in fact this latter is what first reveals the former; necessity is actual in the contingent without losing itself therein. The development up to this fundamental position of Hegel’s, in which negativity or reason and positivity or existence are no longer simply set in antagonism to each other, begins at the latest with Hegel’s essay on *The positivity of the Christian religion*, despite its rigorous criticism of what is merely factual. Taking his starting point from the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Hegel sees positivity as a problem of the “embodiment” of reason. With this new approach Hegel begins to become what he will later realise he was always trying to be: the thinker of the concrete, the thinker of concrete reason.

If we go back to *Folk religion and Christianity* in order to understand how Hegel gains access to the problem of the positivity of a form of reason, in this case religion, then we can see that he does it with the question as to how the “subjective religion” of Jesus became an “objective religion”, the doctrinal

system of Christianity. Only as such in its positive form could the religion of Jesus become a world-historical force. Hegel holds firmly to the notion “that the aim and essence of all true religion, our religion included—is human morality” (GW 1, 282; Nohl 153). This goal he sees appearing in the life of Jesus, but the result is not its spread following Jesus’ “subjective religion” as the lived goal of religion; instead what happens is that positive doctrines and usages take the place of the goal. Hegel sharply distinguishes Jesus (pure subjectivity) from the background of Jewish religion, which he regards as in a state of serious decay in the time of Christ; there is nothing left to it but an awareness of impotence, a spirit of heteronomy, of being directed by something outside itself, reflecting the political disempowerment of the Jews at the time. Against this, Jesus is the preacher of autonomy in the Kantian sense, he does not let himself be pulled down into the general decay of his time. But his preaching was not understood and very soon it was said that the ethics of Jesus had to be followed just because he was the one who taught it, not because one understood that his teaching was the truth. Hegel is now confronted by the question, “what in the religion of Jesus led to it becoming positive?” (GW 1, 287; Nohl 157)—in other words, what caused people to fall back again into heteronomy, into letting their religion be determined for them by others? The first answer to this question is given, according to Hegel, by the fact that Jesus actually could not completely get away from his environment, from the assumptions of the Jewish religion, for example from heteronomy in its attitude to the Tora or its expectations of the Messiah. Another lies in the fact that, precisely because of the newness of his teaching, Jesus says “much . . . about his own individual personality” (GW 1, 289; Nohl 158). In both cases he made indirect reference to authorities, which as such were bound to stand in the way of the free development of the religion rather than promote it. Moreover, the disciples, Hegel says, did “not achieve truth and freedom themselves, but” only found “through arduous study a dark feeling of and formulas for it all” (GW 1, 293 fn.1; Nohl 162). In this process they brought a lot of inappropriate notions to Jesus’ teaching and tried above all to fix what they had actually heard from Jesus and from their experience of him, that is to fix what historically happened, and to sustain the memory of these things continuously in their community. From this resulted a first ritualisation of the original living content; in the end it became a collection of prescriptions that was then merely ‘positive’ and in constant danger of freeing itself from the roots in reason Jesus had revealed and mutating into a society demanding obedience to *its own* laws replacing the focus on those of reason. In this connection Hegel gives a critical account of the emergence of ecclesiastical law and of the ultimate connection between church and state, that is of the dangerous tendency of the state to exercise influence on the morality and attitudes

of the citizens as it seeks to be more than the highest guarantor of law. In the Reformation as Hegel saw it the freedom and subjectivity of belief certainly was re-established according to the original idea, that is in terms of its independence from the positive constitution of the religious community or the church, but not for long. On the whole, the institution and its logic established itself here too instead of subjective religion, for positivity predominated over the immediacy of faith (in the sense of the *fides qua creditur*), the way back to which Luther had shown the individual believers.

Following these historical considerations the text proceeds into a phase that is quite critical of Christianity, in which positivity is no longer described in its effects on the history of the institution, but in its effects on the minds of the individuals and on communities. Here Hegel takes the view that the result of positive Christianity is alienation from the individual's own fantasy.

Christianity has emptied Valhalla and felled the sacred groves, extirpated the people's imagery as shameful superstition, as devilish poison, and given us instead the imagery of a people whose climate, laws, culture, and interests are strange to us and whose history has no connection whatsoever with our own. (GW I, 359; Nohl 215)

Then Hegel contrasts in ideal-typical terms the Greek religious fantasy with Christian positive religion. Despite achieving real freedom and promoting the social life of free people, the former did not escape decay and it was in the age of decay of the ancient world that Christianity, which certainly in its heart included the notions of "autonomy and morality", replaced the religion of fantasy—"[the Christian religion] was cradled in the corruption of the Roman state", says Hegel (GW I, 218; Nohl 140). Pagan religion itself had already taken a rather transcendental direction with fantasy expanding into limitlessness separated from the concrete—Hegel names as examples the Neoplatonists Porphyrius (234–ca. 304 AD) and Iamblicus (died 337 AD), of whom at least the latter took philosophy into dangerous proximity to divination and magic. Porphyrios and Iamblicus had "attempted to equip their gods with the wealth which human beings no longer possessed and then" tried "to conjure some of it back in the form of a gift". Here and in the following quotation the young Hegel formulated calls to struggle which could almost have come from Feuerbach himself and for that reason are so often enthusiastically quoted by Marxist interpreters. "Apart from some earlier attempts", he goes on, "it has been reserved in the main for our epoch to vindicate at least in theory the human ownership of the treasures formerly squandered on heaven" (GW I, 372; Nohl 225). The reference here is to the end of the world of pagan imagery, but it

suggests that Hegel at least at this time holds similar views in relation to positive Christianity. For instance, positive Christianity promotes the belief in miracles and behind that stands again only heteronomy and, as he says at the very end of the text, “the horrors of an objective world” (GW I, 378; not in Nohl). The claim of religion become positive that faith, belief in something, could in any way be conceived of as a duty is itself nothing more than heteronomy. Here Hegel expresses first doubts about Kant’s doctrine of postulates, that is in a faith from practical needs, even if, as Kant claims, this need follows a commandment of reason. The “theology of postulates” then comes down to a “lack of awareness that reason is absolute, complete in itself” (GW I, 358; Nohl 238, not in Knox). In a certain sense the definition of ‘positive faith’ holds also for Kant’s reasoning in the moral proof of God’s existence. “A faith is called positive when the practical is theoretically present in it—what was originally subjective is only [present] as something objective, a religion asserting as the principle of life and action the notion of something objective that cannot become subjective” (Nohl 374, not in Knox).

As we said, Hegel reworked his essay *The positivity of the Christian religion* in 1800. In the new introduction we find some suggestions for making it more accessible indicating shifts in the fundamental position of the essay. In outline we can see the notion taking shape that positivity is no longer considered completely heterogenous to reason. The critique of positivity should not now mean that the “infinite modifications . . . of human nature” (Nohl 140) become invalid or should be even denied. For “living nature is always other than the concept of the same, and hence what for the concept is bare modification, a pure accident, a superfluity becomes a necessity, something living, perhaps the only thing which is natural and beautiful” (Nohl 141). Applying this to the question of religion he writes, “The universal concepts of human nature are too empty to afford a criterion for the special and necessarily diverse needs of religious feeling” (ibid.). This is not to justify any and all kinds of degeneration of religion into superstition, but it is recognised that the ‘natural religion’ of the Enlightenment and rationalism, the “lamplight of general concepts” (Nohl 142), does not go far enough when it comes to understanding a living religion properly. In a certain way, as Hegel writes here, all religious “actions, the most innocent feelings, and the most beautiful imaginative images” (ibid.) can be consigned to contingency by the understanding; but the “ideal” and the entire content of the eternal can be present even in perceptible gestures and external objects. The problem of positivity thus does not consist in the fact that it is possible at all in the context of the eternal or the absolute—there would rather be no absolute for us if we could not bring it into presence before us in sensuous and symbolical form, in the symbolism of language for instance.

Positivity in fact only becomes a problem when, as Hegel says, “the accidental as such, i.e. as what it is for the understanding, makes claims to imperishability, sacrosanctity and veneration” (Nohl 143). Thus Hegel has here actually freed himself from the separation of infinite and finite still found in his *Life of Jesus* and begins to approach the notion that the infinite is not in every aspect simply something other than the finite, but that by appearing within this latter, the infinite can set or posit the finite as its moment. It is then the thinking that seeks to be nothing but finite which produces positivity as external settings or fixtures to which every bridge is broken. In the new introduction Hegel regards the power of religion, and through it also the power of reason, to “subjectivise” or to make itself concrete as greater than he believed when he first composed his *Positivity* essay.

## 5 *Faith and Being*

The texts considered above had their origin in Bern and now we turn to the texts Hegel wrote in Frankfurt. He moved to Frankfurt with the assistance of Hölderlin in 1797 and it is commonly assumed that Hölderlin was also important in helping Hegel achieve progress in his philosophical development. However that may be, in Frankfurt we find Hegel on a new philosophical level revealing the gradual emergence in fundamental outlines of his later philosophy. This is also true of a short but important text that will be discussed first and which Nohl included in an attachment (no. 11) to his volume under the title *Glauben und Sein*—Faith and being.<sup>14</sup> Here too the general observation we made earlier concerning all the writings of Hegel's youth must be kept in mind, nowhere do we find in the young Hegel a thinker of the stature he achieved, indeed of the stature he himself defined in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. That said, there is nevertheless a peculiar boldness to this little text. Despite the incompleteness, its topic makes it highly interesting. As Nohl's title indicates, here for the first time Hegel takes up the question of *being*, which means that still in a very broad and general sense he wants to take a position on ontology. Ontology was a central theme for the old metaphysics, whose basic question concerned being *per se* or the nature of ‘true being’. We recall that Kant it was who buried once and for all the old doctrine of being, the notion of being persisting purely for itself which we then simply have to depict in our thinking in its given determinate forms. For Kant it was senseless to say that there is first being and then, dependent upon that, an understanding of being; “being”

<sup>14</sup> Hegel, TW 1, 250–254, Nohl pp. 382–385.

can only be uttered in the context of our understanding, according to Kant, as a “position” setting up something of which we have an initial understanding in one way or another. In this little text *Faith and Being* Hegel makes a start towards on the one hand, like Kant, not separating being from our understanding but binding the meaning of being to the act of knowing, while on the other hand, unlike Kant, he is not satisfied to accept being as an external “positing” or setting of something independent of what is thought. The meaning of being is for Hegel certainly not that of “position”, of setting or fixing something as it were outside the sphere of thought. The meaning of being is much more that of the *link*. What does it mean to say that being is linking? For Hegel it has a double meaning. *Being* in terms of the matter is the expression of a “unification”, in Kantian terms this would be a synthesis. “Unification and being are synonymous” (Nohl 383). Then again in terms of form *being* is the expression of a reflexive relation in reference to this unification, a belief, a faith. Let us first consider the aspect of unification. Being here does not actually mean immediately *something* (a definite A); A is taken for itself initially as something thought and the being of A is only really taken seriously when I—for instance on the basis of experience—say, there is also something other, a B, i.e. when I think of A synthesised with another. Being then indicates the connection between different things, not simply an abstract identity of thought.

Now one can surely object here from the standpoint of Kant or formal logic that a linkage, a unification of different things would not mean ‘being’ in the sense of that conceptual transcendence which the image of being as (absolute) position usually has. One can synthesise many things, for example one can say of the moon that it is square; in this statement we have different things set in unification, but the copula ‘is’ in the sentence ‘the moon is square’ only displays a connection of images which for Kant does not justify any assertion of the existence of the corresponding complex of images; here ‘is’ functions as purely ‘copulative’ and is not ‘existential’. Kant would say that the formal proposition or judgment ‘the moon is square’ is only an existential judgment if it can be upheld in the context of experience, i.e. together with all other judgments of experience we have already made. Hegel—and we are talking here still about Hegel in his Frankfurt beginnings let us remember—could of course counter that even in this case being lies in a ‘unification’, namely the synthesis of my image of the moon with all other images that I already have or will have. The question here is not whether I *believe* that the moon is square or round or that it *exists* as either square or round, the question is where else can I get being or an assertion of existence if not from an act of *synthesis*? The naked assertion of existence is also a synthesis. With the existential ‘is’, for example in the sentence ‘the moon is’, I only say that I hold the moon to be something

of the sort that I elsewhere also refer to as existing, that is I say that something previously only 'thought', the moon, is *something other* than what is merely thought, i.e. that it should be existing, which is then a unification of something thought with something not thought. The specific sense of the being of the moon then depends upon the activity that sets it outside its immediate or initial state as thought. This happens in the same way when I attach predicates with definite content to the moon, when I *unify* it with things other than what its immediate condition as thought contained. To this extent then the meaning of being does not fall outside of the sphere of what is mediated by thought, a conclusion at which Kant might also have arrived if he had thought his own concept of "transcendental reality" through to the end.

The second aspect that concerns Hegel follows directly from this. The meaning of being is not only a linking beyond immediate thought, it also consists in a linking of this linking to me, the one performing this act. Briefly put in Hegel's own words, "Being can only be believed" (Nohl 383). There is no criterion of being beyond the belief, the faith in being. Such a criterion would even contradict the "absoluteness of being" accepted also by the common view. "Belief", says Hegel at the start of the essay, "is the manner in which what is unified, the means by which an antinomy is unified is present in our imagination. The unification is the activity; this activity, reflected as object, is that which is believed" (Nohl 382). Precisely because being is no 'property' of A to be analytically elicited, it is (at least as something immediate) not an object of possible knowledge; and again precisely because it is not supposed to be something merely thought, it is not something merely intended. I have a reason for saying being and this lies in each case within me, in belief—in the anticipation of totality that turns into an assertion of being.

The following observation may help us understand better exactly what Hegel is concerned with here. Being is required to encompass an opposition—Hegel speaks of an antinomy—while simultaneously turning it into an immediate unity. The meaning of being is to bind us to such a unity of different things, to bring us to immediacy. The term antinomy naturally reminds us of Kant and that association suggests that the meaning of being emerges clearly in a situation where I have no choice but to assert something in the form of an immediate incompatibility and must simultaneously direct my thinking to unity. The physicists describe light as now corpuscular, now waveform—the two descriptions actually exclude one another; as long as they are considered as abstract model forms and theoretical constructions, they have nothing to do with each other. An antinomy arises only when both are used to describe the same thing, that is when they refer to a unity which requires the one description just as much as the other. This same thing, this *one* that requires both is

not simply light as something *thought*, but as existing or the actually *asserted* light. Exactly the same thing happens with the question, for Kant undecidable, as to whether the world has a beginning in space and time or not. As long as distinct models, or possibilities of thought, simply stand side by side here the issue is not especially spectacular. If, however, it turns out that, as Kant sees it, it is the problem of the unity of the real world itself that gives rise to the two theories, one as good as the other, so that the question is not about the theoretical possibility of the one or the other model *per se*, but about the necessary transition of each into the other, then it is precisely this transition that is the real *indicator of being*. With being, as one can also put it, we stand at the limits of our theories, for where we transit from the one to the other theory we still *believe* (in the 'leap' from one to the other theory we cannot *know*) that in the transition we are dealing with *the same thing*. It is very remarkable that Hegel already in this early text says that being does not simply follow from the possibility of thought. That would be the ontological thesis first completely formulated by Johannes Duns Scotus, which held its ground well into modern rationalism via Descartes and *mutatis mutandis* Leibniz among others. It ultimately persists in everyday consciousness, which with a remarkable lack of reflection decides questions as to the being or non-being of something by the criterion whether it can imagine (i.e. think) it or not. Hegel says quite clearly, "No amount of laboured thinking justifies the deduction that something exists; it is certainly as something thought; but something thought is separated from and set over against the thinker" (Nohl 383). Being in contrast is only given in carrying out the unification of the opposites, just as in the judgment the unification of initially different things, others to each other, is the point where being emerges. Being is thus not an 'object' of our thinking, as suggested by ontology ultimately all the way up to Heidegger. Fundamentally speaking then being is only found *in the given actual belief itself, in which the transition is made from the (antinomically) many to the one*. Being is this transition, not the secondary objectification of it, not the transformation of the completed action of being into 'something believed'. This something believed, the objective thing extrapolated from the activity of being and hence set outside the link, is for Hegel now what he calls the "positive", which we have already encountered in the investigation into the positivity of religion. Hegel states firmly that I cannot really believe in the objectified belief, in the objects of belief that have become positive, in the external symbols of the unity of being; they do not stand in the unification but in objective opposition. It is worthy of note that Hegel accuses Kant too of falling back into positivity in the bad sense. At the end of the fragment we read:

In positive religion being, the unification, is only an image, something thought—*I believe that it is* means *I believe in the image*, I believe means that I imagine something to myself, I believe in something believed (Kant, divinity); Kantian philosophy—positive religion” (Nohl 385).

Very soon—from the *System fragment* on and then in complete clarity in the *Jena Logic*—Hegel will begin to explicate further, indeed dialectically, the thesis that being is ‘linkage’, returning with that to an insight which essentially the late Plato also had. The power of being will for Hegel always mean a linking power and this is a matter of great importance both in theoretical terms for the status of categorial determination and in practical terms for the ordering of the goals of action.

## 6 *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*

After a brief encounter with Hegel's first attempts on the theory of being going beyond Kant, we return with the study *The spirit of Christianity and its fate*<sup>15</sup> to a field we are familiar with, to Hegel's investigations of the Christian religion. This text was written in the years 1798–1800 and in it Hegel clearly turns away from the leitmotif of comparable earlier writings, namely from the Kantian principle of morality. We confine ourselves to the most important matters dealt with in it. Hegel reaches much further back than before, he begins with Abraham as the progenitor of the Jewish people and originator of its faith. The principle followed by Abraham already with his departure from his original homeland and family in Mesopotamia is that of *setting in opposition*, the clear setting of limits, which then enters the Jewish religion and its concept of the divine and of God. God is clearly separated from the world, set in opposition to it. According to the fundamental Jewish concept of God, no real unification with him is possible and God only appears as making demands from outside, which is what makes the Jewish religion *essentially* positive. The interesting point here is that Hegel now sees Jesus overcoming this positivity not by replacing the heteronomical religious law with the autonomous moral law; instead Hegel speaks of a “spirit of Jesus, a spirit raised above morality” and of his attempt to “strip the laws of legality, of their legal form” (Nohl 266). Now Jesus brings the πλήρωμα, *pleroma*, the filling, which is simultaneously the fulfilment and the abolition of the law, of the moral law in its Kantian form.

15 Hegel, TW 1, 274–418, Nohl pp. 241–342.

For as Hegel sees it even the Kantian moral law, Kant's concept of duty, presupposes separation, opposition, for instance in the opposition between duty and inclination or *homo noumenon* and *homo phaenomenon*. Now we know already that speaking in such oppositions at least does not mean speaking of being, which is the unification of oppositions. Jesus no longer preaches the categorical imperative; instead he preaches being as the presence of mind and spirit, love and life. A 'positive' man is now anyone who stands outside this absolute unity, outside this presence of being and spirit; he falls under the law, he suffers an external destiny, he lives in a world of positivity, as such in external relations, because he himself does not understand being as relating, as connecting, thus for example as love. Hegel says on love:

It is a sort of dishonour to love when it is commanded, i.e. when love, something living, a spirit, is called by name. To utter it is to reflect on it, and its name or the utterance of its name is not spirit, not its essence, but something opposed to that. Only in name or as a word, can it be commanded; thou shalt love is something that can only be said. Love itself pronounces no such imperative. It is no universal opposed to a particular [like the Kantian moral law], no unity of the concept, but a unity of spirit, divinity. To love God is to feel oneself in the totality of life, with no restrictions, in the infinite. In this feeling of harmony there is no universality, since in a harmony the particular is not in discord but in concord, or otherwise there would be no harmony. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' does not mean to love him as much as yourself, for love thyself does not make any sense. It means 'love him as [if he were] you', i.e. love is a feeling of a life equal to yours, not one stronger or weaker than you. Only through love is the might of objectivity broken." (Nohl 296)

With these views Jesus becomes a "beautiful soul" in Schiller's sense and Hegel claims that this notion of being and of the beautiful soul stand higher than the spirit of division and opposition surrounding them. Confronted with the alternatives of either sharing the destiny of his people, i.e. their merely positive existence, or of his own demise, Jesus chooses the latter. After his death the disciples did unite under the aegis of the love taught and lived by Jesus, but they tied the spirit of Christianity *nolens volens* to a positive existence, they made it into a perpetually positive religious spirit, a historical force, oscillating between the unification in which it originated and the divisions, e.g. of state and church, which it can never resolve. To conclude we shall extract from all the detail a section in which what we have already got to know as the philosophy of being and unification is discussed in the context of the philosophy of religion.

In developing his early and at the beginning totally rationalistic philosophy of religion bit by bit in his writings Hegel gradually departed from the normative primacy of morality. In its stead we have a primacy of being understood as “believed synthesis”. This concept of being is in fact rather peculiar replacing, as it does, the imperative causing the division or at least deepening the divisions already present. Still, it is certainly more than positivity, more than an empirical presence within the subject-object division; it is rather the anticipation of the overcoming of this separation, the anticipation of totality—and seen in these terms it is perhaps not so strange at all that being as the certainty of the unification of difference could be the topic of a religious sermon, the focus of a religious standpoint. Kant claimed that we cannot theoretically advance to the highest unity, to totality, neither in cosmology, in relation to the concept of the world, nor in theology, in relation to the unconditional standpoint of God encompassing everything real. Hegel’s view now is that while it is true that we can have no immediate theoretical ‘knowledge’ of the highest unity, neither also of the derived unity, e.g. of unity in the judgment, the unity manifesting in an assertion of being, what we can have is a free, anticipatory *certainty* of totality, which he calls belief or faith. There is more to be said on the being that is believed in and anticipated. As an example, love is definitely to be preferred for this being when it is defined in terms of its unification structure, as connecting. We can take a moment and look back to ancient times, to the beginnings of philosophy and there we find a partially comparable concept of a common context for being, being-one and love. In the fifth century BC exactly one generation before Socrates, Empedocles of Agrigent taught that there are two cosmogonic principles, *love* (φιλίη, φιλότης, *filie*, *filotes*) bringing existing things together and causing them to be formed into a world on the one hand and *conflict* (νεῖκος, *neikos*) driving everything apart and into dissolution on the other. The reference to Empedocles is appropriate here for two reasons. First, Hölderlin, the friend of Hegel’s youth whose society he shared for the last time in the Frankfurt years, was working on his tragic drama *Der Tod des Empedokles*—The death of Empedocles, virtually at the same time as Hegel was at work on *The spirit of Christianity and its destiny*. Hölderlin’s tragedy has survived only in three fragmentary drafts. Hegel received a great deal of philosophical stimulus from his friend in Frankfurt. Hölderlin had attended Fichte’s lectures in Jena and admired him very much, but he also tried to suggest options for breaking through the limits of Fichte’s I-philosophy. In 1795 Hölderlin wrote the well-known short essay entitled *Urteil und Sein*—Judgment and being,<sup>16</sup> in which he tries to understand being not only from the I-identity like Fichte, but from a unification of opposed factors, a unification of

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16 Hölderlin, Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe 4/1, Stuttgart 1961, 216–217.

“subject and object”. Self-consciousness for example is for Hölderlin consciousness of being in the sense of the consciousness of such a unification, a self-overcoming of opposition between I and unknown others that is not simply to be found in the formal relation of consciousness to itself. In his essay *Grund zum Empedokles*—Grounds for Empedocles, which must have been written in 1799, Hölderlin gives his reasons for writing *The death of Empedocles* exemplifying such a consciousness of self and being in the character of Empedocles, which consciousness, as Hölderlin says, is destroyed by its own “excess of inwardness” that makes it incapable of reconciling itself to the positive world and its particularity. The consciousness of Empedocles is the “pure life”, the knowledge of being wholly everything without being able to give it a name; it is a standpoint of totality, a “total feeling”, which however is “present only in feeling and is not available to knowledge”. Nature and art, what is there spontaneously and what is produced by man, are here “only harmoniously set against one another”, the “more artistic man is the blossom of nature”. It is against this that particularity, “destiny” develops. The “unifying factor”, Hölderlin says, must “perish” from its own particularity, “because it appears too visible and sensuous”. Empedocles himself knows the “fruits of becoming positive”; he knows “that the more effectively he expresses what is inside, the more certainly will he perish”. Moreover, Empedocles represents what Hölderlin has in mind with the religious standpoint; he elevates himself “with outrage above human inadequacy”, as already stated in the Frankfurt plan of 1797, i.e. he elevates himself to religion because for Hölderlin religion is a “mythical festival of life” elevating itself above “humans’ baser needs”.<sup>17</sup> In concrete terms Empedocles, and this is supported by the fragments of the philosopher that have survived, tells his contemporaries that he is no less than a god<sup>18</sup>—a claim that his Sicilian contemporaries heard with much the same sense of disgust as Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries listen to Hegel’s version of his doctrine of unification. Considering all this there is an intriguing parallel between Hölderlin’s Empedocles and Hegel’s Jesus in the *Spirit of Christianity* text. Hölderlin’s “highest inwardness” for example corresponds to the description of Jesus as a “beautiful soul” in Hegel’s account; the “elevation above base needs” corresponds to the breaking of the “might of the objective”; and finally death is for both heroes unavoidable, for Hölderlin because Empedocles drives his individual self-consciousness to an extreme peak, where he can no longer unite with human beings as they are but only with the “all” of nature, and for Hegel, because Jesus’ existence amounted to a “separation from the world and flight from it into heaven; restoration, in the

17 Hölderlin, *ibid.*, *Grund zum Empedokles*—Grounds for Empedocles, 149–162.

18 Empedocles, in Diels-Kranz, Fragment B 112.

ideal world, of the life that was becoming dissipated into the void; at every opposition, recollection of God and aspiration towards God" (Nohl 329). Both heroes do not shy away from the conflict into which they are driven by following their notion of love; both experience their destiny as the emergence of Empedocles' *νείκος*, *neikos*, his principle of dissociation. Both their messages fade in the noise of the day, of the baser needs, of the law; but then both find also their disciples, who seek to propagate what they have heard as best they can.

Let us return to Hegel and his way of grappling with the problem. Jesus stands with his *all-is-one* teaching beyond the chasm between "subject and object", he stays away from the grasp of "objectivity" and in that he can only "be grasped by faith" (Nohl 312). Love, which was where we started, designates precisely this structure and form embodying the insight that they do not stand opposed and alien to each other, but that both are understood from a unity which is more than fragmented "positive" existence. "In love", says Hegel, "human beings find themselves in other human beings" and this structure will be found again later in his concept of spirit. It is important to note that not only does Hegel draw consequences here for the philosophy of spirit, but that he also draws the first logical consequences from this insight: that the whole is prior to its parts, life is prior to the living things, that love is prior to the lovers in their separation. Here we shall take up only the one aspect that Hegel finds in his interpretation of the beginning of the gospel of John. This beginning of the fourth gospel, which speaks of God and his revelation in the *λόγος*, *logos*, which means reason but also word and language,<sup>19</sup> has always inspired philosophers to speculative interpretations. In this sense Hegel attaches some observations on language to the prologue of the gospel indicating how the infinite content, the unification of all oppositions must be grasped.

The beginning of John's gospel contains a series of propositional sentences which speak of God and the divine in more appropriate phraseology. It is to use the simplest form of reflective phraseology to say: "In the beginning *was* the *logos*; the *logos was with* God, and God *was* the *logos*; in him *was* life." But these sentences have only the deceptive semblance of judgments, for the predicates are not concepts, not universals like those necessarily contained in judgments expressing reflection. On the

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19 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy III*, TW 20, 106 f. "*λόγος*, *logos*, is more precisely 'word'. It is a beautiful ambiguity of the Greek word—reason and simultaneously language. For language is the pure existence of mind and spirit . . .", translation in Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol.III, by Haldane and Simson, 1896, p. 204.

contrary, the predicates are themselves once more living and existing. Even this simple form of reflection is not adapted to the spiritual expression of spirit. Nowhere more than in the communication of the divine is it necessary for the recipient to grasp the communication with the depths of his own spirit. Nowhere is it less possible to learn or assimilate passively, because everything expressed about the divine in the language of reflection is *eo ipso* contradictory; and the passive spiritless assimilation of such an expression not only leaves the deeper spirit empty but also ravages the understanding receiving it and for which it is a contradiction. This necessarily objective language hence finds sense and weight only in the spirit of the reader and to an extent which differs with the degree to which the relationships of life and the opposition of life and death have entered into his consciousness. (Nohl 306)

Hegel is referring to a question that is not completely unknown in the history of philosophy, especially in the tradition of dialectic. The question is how an infinite content, how an all-encompassing unity is supposed to be capable of being expressed in finite language, in the discursive form of the judgment that normally only moves from one finite term to another. Plato faced this problem and he insists that if philosophy presupposes a principle of unity—in Plato's case the *good*—then it cannot simply utter this principle and hope to communicate it as such; Plato confines himself, at least in the *Republic*, to giving similes and analogies, but he requires the dialectician to be able to give an account of the original unity lying beyond all determinate being.<sup>20</sup> Similar lines of thought can be discerned, for example, in Nicholas of Cusa's writings in relation to the absolute one or in Fichte's on the "subject-object", which is the originally acting self-consciousness of which no objective, conscious image or representation can be given, for it is already active "unseen" in all objectification and all consciousness. Hegel observes that in John's gospel the sentence "God was the logos" takes the form of a judgment, a proposition, so that it appears necessary to assert and assume a difference between the two sides "God" and "logos", a finitude of the two in their opposition to each other. The distinction drawn by the judgment consists as a rule in the fact that the predicate or the determination is more general than the subject, than that which is to be determined. "The oak is a tree" as a proposition declares the oak, a specific type of tree, to be something general, to be a tree as such. "This table is green" makes out of the single table before us something general, i.e. an object in the class of all green things, thus setting it in a greater range than

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20 Plato, *Republic* esp. VII, 534 b–c.

its being a table as such indicates. So then in the sentence “God was the logos”, logos would initially be something more general than God and, as Hegel says, one can take logos as reason as such and that applies not only to God but also to other beings. The meaning of the sentence “God was the logos”, however, is not that God falls under a concept we know from other contexts and in that way explains what he is. The sentence should not simply reflect on its subject through the predicate by subsuming the former under the latter, instead it is supposed to identify both substantially, which means it has to overcome the difference made by its form to express an unrestricted oneness of the two sides. Then again the distinction should also be made, God should not only be declared to be absolute unity—that would be as it were the absolute “God in himself” free of predicates—but also, as Hegel says, God should be described as “potentially separable and infinitely divisible” (Nohl 306), as one could say “God for us” and this would be the logos. The point of the sentence that “God was the logos” is then to unite both sides so that God in himself is God for us; that God within himself is the God who goes outside himself and returns back into himself. Absolute unity is reflected in every differentiation, through the “multiplicity, the infinity of actuality”, as Hegel says (Nohl 307).

All this on the relation between God and logos applies also to life for the young Hegel and is perhaps more easily grasped as such. Life is predicated of each life form in the proposition as something external to it, as a universal; but life is not found outside of the life forms. The life form in being wholly what it is, namely living, does not simply persist independently in itself, but is pushed beyond itself, it is referred to things outside itself and is as such a relation, for what is devoid of relations is dead. In the very same sense in which the living thing is active self-relation, in exactly that sense is it also relation to others, i.e. it is precisely that which in the form of the proposition is only expressed as separated, only as an immediate opposition. This is why it is so important to recover the content of the proposition through what is living—here then the totality concept *life*—from the form of the proposition and the differences of reflection attaching to it in the moment of its utterance. Hegel expresses this immediately following in the text by saying that we have to grasp the matter “with a deeper spirit” or not only analytically, but, as one could say, holistically, in its totality.

Just as Hegel's theory of unification in *Faith and Being* contains a remarkable fundamental intuition, namely that being is not immediate, but a mediating relation, also that it is not knowledge but certainty, and even if the text there left much to be desired in the argumentation, here he anticipates a thesis that will later become central to his philosophy, although he is still developing it in very sketchy terms and leaving many questions open. The interpretation

above of the prologue to the gospel of John presages Hegel's theory of the "speculative sentence", which we will encounter in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and will be explained more fully in that context. Briefly, Hegel tries to show there that genuinely philosophical sentences, while they take the *form* of propositions cannot be understood according to the logic of the common judgment. Hegel believes that philosophical sentences are so constituted that their content agitates against the form of the judgment, a form of finite thinking. Philosophy would never discard the judgment form, but it tries to draw out the presuppositions built into it as a form in order to overcome them. In philosophy thoughts are not designated, they are thought; the thought certainly needs external form, but it turns against that external form if there is any chance of it becoming a constricting thought-corset. We cannot go into it further here, but this question also relates to the issue of positivity. In philosophy reason must also become positive, representing itself in finite forms and finite expressions. But these forms and expressions must not be confused with reason itself, they may not impose their law on it, but must, to use a favourite expression of Hegel's, be "rendered fluid" and kept living. This is Hegel's programme for achieving what he will call *dialectic*, not to be confused with philosophy taking a cynical, distanced or ironic attitude to its forms of expression.

## 7 *System Fragment of 1800*

We leave the largely theological writings of Hegel's early period behind and turn now briefly to the Frankfurt *System Fragment*, which stands on the borderline between the discussion of problems of religion and the philosophical development of the system.<sup>21</sup> This concentrated text dated "14 September, 1800" deals with topics in a manner that puts it surprisingly close to the later *System drafts* in Jena; it is just as cryptic as they are and shares also a kind of interwoven density in which the fundamental dialectical motifs of Hegel's philosophy are slowly worked out. The by now familiar concept of life is the opener; life itself is nothing other than an infinite diversity of self-differentiations, a self-differentiation into living things, into organic structures and individuals. Life is one central piece of evidence for a thesis of Hegel's that is also familiar to us: *being is linking*. Here the thesis returns with a vengeance.

21 Hegel, TW 1, 419–427; Nohl pp. 343–351; cf. also Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegels Leben*—Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's life, Berlin 1844 (reprint Darmstadt 1998), 94–99. The *System Fragment* is included in Knox' volume but translated by Richard Kroner.

Life, this singular term designating a totality endlessly broken in itself, exists only as tying the living things together within it, which themselves are only differentiated by it, and its being, its living vitality, is again nothing other than a *being-linked*. Here Hegel discovers the productivity of difference, while the differentiated sides are simultaneously nothing other than the demonstration of the identity of life. Life is not simply a collective concept, an abstract universal in which living things would be merely counted together; the life forms are after all defined in real terms by life, for if one subtracted the life, this universal, from them, then all that would remain is disorganisation, decay into an anonymous manifold or material condition, which no longer contains anything comparably substantial, which is no longer capable of seeking linkage. Hegel sharpens the point into the following terms: life, the universal, “only has its being in opposition”, it is nothing “over”, “under”, “behind” or “in” the living things, life *is* their self-opposition. It is the productive difference as such and as difference simultaneously the joining of the different sides, thus that which each for itself is not. If we start with the different sides, with the life forms as positive life, then their difference or the life that stands against or confronts the living things, as one might say, negative life, is precisely the *one* life as such, which however is nowhere to be isolated *as such*. This is the first example for Hegel’s key concept, which, as we have already indicated, he only names later, namely “absolute negativity”, the pure joining in opposition that simultaneously relates itself to itself by affirming and overcoming the opposed sides, at once positing and negating them. In Hegel’s own words, “the manifold [i.e. life] itself excluded from an organic whole [i.e. the living things] and existing only as thus opposed, must nevertheless be conceived, in itself and in abstraction from that organisation, not only as absolutely manifold and internally related, but also as connected with the living whole which is excluded from it” (TW 1, 419; Nohl, 346). Then we have the life forms, positive life, as we call it, the individuals. Hegel says of them, “the concept of individuality encompasses both opposition to infinite variety and inner association with it. A human being is an individual life in so far as he is other than all the elements and the infinity of individual beings outside himself; he is only an individual life in so far as he is one with all the elements, with the infinity of lives outside himself” (TW 1, 419 f.; Nohl *ibid.*). Immediately following this we have another two-tiered sentence constructed exactly like a Kantian antinomy, “he [man] is only to the extent that the whole of life is divided, he the one part, everything else the other part; he is only to the extent that he is not a part and nothing is separated off from him” (TW 1, 420; Nohl *ibid.*).

The individual, that is life concentrated in a point, is just as immediately the division of life as it is the whole of life, undivided life—Leibniz would have

said the mirror of the entire infinity of the universe. Whether one understands the individual as a part of life and life itself as undivided or, as the word, its name, suggests, the individual as what is undivided and life itself as division depends for Hegel on what reflection in each case takes as fixed or fixes as the presupposition; in the matter itself *both* are *simultaneously* valid so that reflection is really just pulling life and the living thing apart from each other. Reflection always relates to *fixed life*; this is especially true in all merely objective images and representations which the individual sciences are forced by their methodological assumptions to make of life. The genuine characteristic of life, however, is that it is not object of a representation, but a being in the sense of a highest synthesis and unification with simultaneous differentiation and dissociation of this synthesis. Reflection can go so far as to address life as a unity of the finite and the infinite, but even in that it still sets itself against life, not realising that it itself, reflection, is thinking life. It does not realise that the totality of which it makes an image to itself does not lie outside it, but is part of living reflection itself. This is why reflection can only offer finite images of life; Leibniz' monads imagine the universe only in finite representations. At this point Hegel replaces reflection with religion—religion now consists in the fact that man “elevates” himself “from finite to infinite life”, as one might say, when he is totally suffused with the spirit of life and is liberated from all merely objective perspectives on things. Here Hegel has definitely arrived at a concept of religion that has very little left in common with his rationalistic beginnings in the understanding; at most one could speak still of a programme of “higher enlightenment”, as Hölderlin refers to it in his essay *Über religion*—On religion, as a desideratum of the times. This essay contains many other surprising parallels to Hegel's *System Fragment*. At that time philosophy ended for Hegel in religion, but that was just a phase. Philosophy as such is, after all, for Hegel at least in the year 1800, still a discipline grounded in reflection. It is a kind of thinking that on the one hand sets itself apart from non-thinking and on the other relies on the opposition of thinker and object of thought. Philosophy cannot be said to take the standpoint of life as does the elementary religious consciousness of infinite life. Instead it is assigned the task of “revealing the finitude in everything finite”—thus to be critique—“and to demand its completion through reason”—thus to work dialectically on what is finite. But in this it remains always locked in the *form*, it has the absolute *content* outside it and is, one could say, utterly, fundamentally alienated from life. At the end of the phase of the young Hegel's ‘apocrypha’, we have thus a peculiar turning point in the return of religion, now not as the vehicle for moralising the world, but as the presence of total content to which philosophy relates only eccentrically. It is however very important not to overlook the fact that surreptitiously

Hegel's philosophical repertoire has matured, not yet to its final form but far enough so that in Jena a thinker with an immediately unmistakable profile can emerge before the public. What also emerges is, as we shall see, philosophy's self-assurance of being the real science of totalities.

## 8 First Political Writings

Before Hegel emerges as a philosophical writer and takes his habilitation in Jena—on his thirty-first birthday, 27 August, 1801—he was greatly occupied with three political texts. Here then we encounter that third issue which beside the I-philosophy and the problem of religion interested Hegel from the start. In 1798 there appeared in Frankfurt a book, translated by Hegel with his introduction and notes, entitled *Vertrauliche Briefe über das vormalige staatsrechtliche Verhältnis des Waadtlandes zur Stadt Bern. Eine völlige Aufdeckung der ehemaligen Oligarchie des Standes Bern*—Confidential letters on the previous constitutional relation of the Waadtland to the city of Bern; full exposure of the former oligarchy of the estate of Bern. It was a polemic from the pen of the Lausanne jurist Jean Jacques Cart (1748–1813) against the patrician domination of Bern over the Waadtland (Pays de Vaud), of which Hegel provides examples in his notes illustrating the excesses and the offences against the rights of the residents of the Waadtland.<sup>22</sup> In the same year Hegel also produced a political polemic of his own, which became known under the title *Über die neuesten inneren Verhältnisse Württembergs, besonders über die Gebrechen der Magistratsverfassung*—On the latest internal conditions of Württemberg, in particular on the inadequacies of the municipal constitution. In fact, originally it bore the title *Daß die Magistrate von den Bürgern gewählt werden müssen*—The magistrates must be elected by the citizens!<sup>23</sup> Hegel took the advice of his friends in Württemberg and did not publish this text. It begins with a call “to the people of Württemberg” and reflects the fermentation of the epoch of the revolution that still persisted just a few years before the effective end of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1803.

In his own text Hegel writes of “institutions, constitutions, laws that are no longer in accord with customs, needs, opinions of the people” and “from which the spirit has flown”. He points to specific cases of injustice but makes no plea for a real revolution. He advocates instead a critical examination of the

<sup>22</sup> Hegel, TW 1, 255–267 includes Hegels explanatory notes to Cart's text.

<sup>23</sup> Hegel, TW 1, 268–273. The text survives only in fragments, translation by N.S. Nisbet in *G.W.F. Hegel: Political Writings* ed. Laurence Dickey and N.S. Nisbet, CUP, New York 1999.

existing rights and prerogatives by the classes possessing them themselves, but then they have to demonstrate that they have the “strength” for that, namely that they “are capable of elevating themselves above their petty interests, of rising to justice”. Hegel is clearly not very optimistic that anything meaningful can happen in the direction of the desired greater participation of the people in the government without the presence of a genuine *volonté générale*. So long as this spirit is lacking, as long as “the people does not know its rights”, “popular elections would only serve to promote the complete overthrow of our constitution”. So he considers “giving the right to vote to a corps of enlightened and upright men independent of the ducal court”. How this corps is to be constituted, however, Hegel acknowledges that he does not know. At the end of the fragment the good will to reform comes to a standstill. Rosenkranz characterised the text as follows, “the principles of the text oscillate between those of Rousseau’s politics, which Hegel revered in Tübingen, and Plato’s notion of a class both real and ideal to which he turned his attention in Frankfurt seeking to balance unity and equality with the diversity of the particular.”<sup>24</sup>

That narrowly focussed text was followed by a larger essay devoted to the political conditions of the expiring German empire which Hegel began working on in Frankfurt and did not finish until 1802. His political manifesto *Die Verfassung Deutschlands*—The German constitution,<sup>25</sup> was also not published and remains just a collection of fragments. It was at first dated by Rosenkranz to the years 1806 to 1808, to Hegel’s time as editor of the *Bamberger Zeitung*. Now, however, we know that the text predates the dissolution of the constitutional foundation of the German empire in the *Regensburger Reichsdeputationshauptschluß*—the Regensburg resolution of the Reichstag’s imperial delegation, in 1803 and the abdication of emperor Franz II on 6 August 1806. “Germany is a state no more” (GW V, 161); *post festum* this would sound trivial but the confirmation by the course of events lend much weight to Hegel’s first sentence, which is now assigned to a clean copy of 1802/3. He counters the claim that the rules and regulations of constitutional law, whose demise he experienced, are still capable of a rational, scientific concept; for Hegel constitutional law could then only be empirically described, not thought through, and “what can no longer be comprehended by concepts no longer exists”. Here again we find the central complaint from the text on the political conditions in Württemberg, that the forms on which the empire rests can no

<sup>24</sup> Karl Rosenkranz, *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>25</sup> Hegel, GW V, 1–219; TW I, 451–610. The Suhrkamp edition essentially follows the edition Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*—Writings on politics and philosophy of right, ed G. Lasson, 2nd ed., Leipzig 1923.

longer be filled with life; the inability to resist France militarily brings out the internal disintegration, "a group of people can only call itself a state when it is united in the common defence of the totality of its property" (GW V, 165). Hegel goes on to distinguish different state concepts; he opposes the machine state, the addiction to regulating everything down to the last detail, as well as centralism. Daunting examples he finds in the "leathern, spiritless life" of the French republic under the Directory as well as in the "aridity" and excessive regimentation of the Prussian state. Instead he relies upon "the free allegiance, the self assurance and individual efforts of the people" rather than state power (GW V, 177)—this is a theme that remains constant all the way into the later *Philosophy of Right*.

In the course of a comprehensive historical retrospective the roots of the decay of the German constitution are found to lie in the particularism of the imperial orders and the related fact that in more recent history Germany became the central arena of European conflicts. It is always astonishing just how much detail Hegel marshals, such as the minutiae of the administration of finances. He must have conducted many individual studies to arrive at such a comprehensive picture of the desolate state of the constitution as it ends in internal divisions. An earlier draft contains suggestions for reform to enable Germany to reorganise itself into a state once again. For that a new political midpoint, a genuine state power, would have to be established. So how is this supposed to happen? Hegel outlines what is perhaps a rather desperate suggestion, which in fact goes back to Machiavelli. He claims that "a development" like the creation of a state was "never the fruit of reflection, but of violence".

The general run of the German people along with their regional nobilities, who know nothing other than the separation of the German populations and for whom their unification is something utterly alien, must be gathered into a mass by the violence of a conqueror; they must be forced to consider themselves attached to Germany. (GW V, 157)

Interpreters are divided as to who this conqueror could have been. Napoleon perhaps, or the Habsburg archduke Karl, who had distinguished himself in the wars against France. Hegel himself called this tyrant of the Germans a new Theseus, referring to the state hero of ancient Athens. According to tradition, Theseus had liberated Athens from its external dependencies and unified Attica and went on, even as king of Athens, to restrict the power of the throne, which is why he is also seen as the progenitor of Athenian democracy. Similarly, the new Theseus, whoever he may be, should "have magnanimity and concede a share to the people, having created it from such disparate populations, in

what concerns everyone”, but he should also “have character enough . . . to bear with alacrity the hatred Richelieu and other great men brought upon themselves, those who grind down the particularities and idiosyncracies of the people” (ibid.). The fragment ends with a sentence whose harshness is to be understood in consideration of something which, despite being devoid of the concept, continues to exist in some fashion even in the midst of collapse, “The concept and insight inspire so much mistrust, that they must be legitimated through violence until men submit” (GW v, 158).

In November 1800 Hegel wrote to Schelling after a few years of being out of contact. Schelling had in the meantime risen to prominence, in contrast to the modest private tutor Hegel. In 1798 with Goethe’s support Schelling, at the age of 23, was appointed professor of philosophy in Jena, philosophical capital of the times, and a series of texts appearing in quick succession had made him famous. Hegel speaks of Schelling’s “great public career” before launching into a review of the years gone by. “In my scientific development,” he wrote, “which started from the more subordinate needs of man, I was inevitably driven toward science and the ideal of my youth had to turn into a form of reflection, indeed into a system”<sup>26</sup>—we naturally think here of the *System Fragment* discussed above. Schelling responds immediately to Hegel’s request for assistance inviting him to come to Jena and to live in his house at first. Hegel took up the invitation arriving in Jena at the start of 1801 and the two immediately launched once again into an intensive collaboration. Notable in the course of that collaboration was the work together on publishing the *Kritische Journal der Philosophie*, founded by the two in 1802; indeed, for a time it was unclear which of the two authored some of the texts. In Jena Hegel began immediately, as Rosenkranz puts it, “publicly to establish his philosophical physiognomy”.<sup>27</sup> He does that in published philosophical texts, including the habilitation, and then in intensively prepared lecture courses, conducted with a view to publishing new books, a process which culminated in the final result at the end of the Jena period, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

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<sup>26</sup> Hegel, *Briefe* v. 1, no. 29, p. 59. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 64.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenkranz ibid.

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## Jena Exoteric

The move to Jena at the beginning of 1801 meant far more to Hegel than just a change of location. He moved onto the stage of the great intellectual discussions of the time, he took up a public role as philosophical author, as teacher at the university, which even after Fichte's departure still possessed an atmosphere of intensive intellectual activity, and finally he entered into the partnership with Schelling, lodestar of romantic seekers after the natural, who also appeared to be something of a privileged heir of the idealist awakening. Hegel went to work immediately after arriving in town reviewing everything that had happened in philosophy in the years before. What did Hegel himself have to contribute to these advanced discussions? The simple answer would be the concept we got to know in the analysis of the *System Fragment*, namely that of *life*, the inner dialectic of which Hegel had already been working on and which for him would take on model character for his entire philosophy. In view of this model character, we should remind ourselves once more at this point briefly of the *speculative* concept of life.

### 1 The Speculative Concept of Life

Life as a philosophical initiative is unique to Hegel. Inspiration for this he found neither in Fichte's I-philosophy nor in Schelling's attempt to expand that with the new dimension of an independent philosophy of nature. Life, or more precisely the relation between life and living beings, as paradigmatic for the inseparable unity of whole and part, of totality and moment, of the unity of unity itself and plurality or, as it appears in the *Difference* essay in the formula *the identity of identity and non-identity*, is the first instance of what Hegel means by the term "concrete universal"; it is, as we have said, an anticipation of absolute negativity, the centrepiece of Hegel's mature system. What is it then that endows this concept of life with its exceptional character?

First, when we ask after the 'being' of life, we realise that it is not as an object that life 'is', it is not simply there along with other given things. We are for instance accustomed to distinguishing the organic from the inorganic by emphasising distinguishing characteristics of the organic such as sentience and above all its ability to reproduce itself. In the description of the structural properties of life one can hardly avoid relying on specific functional or systemic

features designating a qualitatively higher degree of complexity in comparison to non-living matter and which is understood as the ability to maintain “dynamic equilibrium” in an “open system structure” (Ludwig von Bertalanffy). Kant in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* said that the phenomena of life require something other than a merely linear-causal explanation; for Kant too life is not simply an object out there beside other objects, it is inherently mediated, which at least suggests the concept of an inner purposefulness. Our concern here is not how the concept of life is to be brought into line with external objectivity or rather how that does not happen; our focus has to be on its own inner logic. Life for Hegel is not ‘being’ in the sense of something existing positively, but being in the sense of relation, being as linking in the sense we are already acquainted with and which for a dialectical ontology, as we find in Hegel, is constitutive. An indication in this direction is already the fact that life “sets” itself on its own initiative “in relation” with what is not living, assimilating the inorganic and integrating it, i.e. determining it from the position of life itself, turning it into a moment. Hegel formulates this as overcoming it by negating its immediacy, or setting it as overcome. Water, air, heat, minerals are all dead, inorganic matter; in the life process in contrast they are related to each other becoming moments of this process, working off each other and acquiring their specific significance from the whole process. Life is the power over these materials, it is their “idealisation” in relation to a unity they themselves do not constitute. It displaces them into a state of relatedness of which Hegel says that it is the more original sense of being than that of mere isolated existence.

That the meaning of being in life is relation does not only emerge from the fact that life sets itself in relation to the inorganic, to what is dead, modifying it in specific ways and, as it were, awakening life and vitality in it. Life is for Hegel also on the inside, in its internal structure, nothing other than self-relating. It is a unity that immediately divides, separating out into the living things or individuals. Then again this separation is at the same time nothing other than setting the parts and this unity in relation in two senses. First, the parts or individuals each relate to each other, their being is a being-for-another in all life functions; the living thing that is only *for itself* and no longer present for other living things is on the way to death; indeed, the death of the living thing is nothing other than its final isolation, its exit from the context of life and precisely in that the dissolution of individuality. In death the individual is absolutely isolated and is no longer a unity in its external relations; without returning outwards it has gone into itself and is simultaneously externally merely positively present, no longer as immediately *negated* positivity. In this the second sense it is already clear that through their differences to each other

as well as through their mutual relations mediated by these differences, the individuals relate *to life itself*, to their common universal, to “undivided life”, as Hegel says. Life in the singular is logically something other than the sum of the lives in the plural which the single living things lead; life, as conceptually slippery and not susceptible to positive determination as it is, is the common ground or the essence of living things; it is pure relation and pure differentiation as such, it is an *infinity* standing against the finite life of the living. As we know already, Hegel sees the distinction between infinity and finitude as a difference of reflection, itself a finite instrument with which to approach the dialectic of life. Another such difference of reflection is the opposition between universal and individual, a well-known opposition with a long history in philosophy which has produced a great diversity of concepts of the *universal* and the *ens singulare*. This is worth keeping in mind here because the relation between universal and individual understood from Hegel’s model of life in fact takes on new contours; Hegel’s dialectical conceptual realism, i.e. his claim that the universal can never be grasped merely as an *abstractum*, is to be understood primarily from this model. The two sides, universal and individual, are not for Hegel independent *entities*, but are to be understood from their immediate relation to each other, which comprises their distinctness as well as their unity. The universal then is not an abstractly independent essence after the manner in which the Platonic ideas are often regarded as lying isolated on the other side of an abyss that is only to be bridged with great difficulty, separated in principle from the particular phenomena. Nor is the individual in an equally abstract individuality genuine being, which can be superseded in the direction of a universal in name only. Rather, whoever speaks of the universal must speak immediately of its particularisation, and whoever speaks of an individual, must speak immediately of its overcoming in the link to another individual and then on to the universal. Whoever speaks of life cannot exclude the living and whoever speaks of the living only understands them when he understands them as self-positing life, as life setting itself. Clearly this perspective excludes a genuinely ontological differentiation of universal and individual in which the two are located on distinct metaphysical levels; it also excludes a purely formal distinction of the two sides, such as that by reference to their ranges. For Hegel it is fundamentally impossible—and this holds not only for the concept of life—to comprehend the relation of universal to individual from the logic of subsumption. The living do not fall “under” life, rather they *are* life in its presence. Thus beings endowed with reason do not fall under the general concept of reason, rather they *are* reason realising itself. It is reflection, abstraction separating the two sides, which isolates them artificially setting them against each other—the abstraction of ontology no less than that

of formal logic; both disciplines are for Hegel sciences of reflection, i.e. they adopt a one-sided, *subjective* standpoint against the totality that philosophy is required to address.

## 2 *Difference Essay*

Before his habilitation Hegel published a book in Jena that has come to be known by the short title *Differenzschrift*—the *Difference* essay, the full title of which is *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*—Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's system of philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Thus Hegel did not announce himself with the system he brought with him from Frankfurt, but with a comparative study containing his first public utterances on the philosophy of his time. The text was an immediate response to Karl Leonhard Reinhold's *Beiträge zur leichtern Übersicht des Zustands der Philosophie zu Anfang des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*—Contributions to an easy overview of the state of philosophy at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which appeared in the same year, 1801. Reinhold (1757–1823), who originally made his name as a follower of Kant and then founded his own *Elementary philosophy*, combining a “theory of man's imaginative power” with the attempt to ground philosophy on the “facts of consciousness”, was himself a philosophy professor in Jena from 1787 to 1794, where he counted among the more important of Fichte's inspirations. Later he was a follower of Fichte himself for a short time before turning to a “rational realism”, the position from which he criticised the speculative tendencies in philosophy in his *Contributions*. The statement most readily associated with his name is the so-called *principle of consciousness*. “In consciousness the subject both distinguishes the imaginative faculty of representation from and refers it to both subject and object.”<sup>2</sup> This is a basic principle for any kind of self-confessed philosophy of consciousness.

Hegel accuses Reinhold in his *Contributions* of not having understood Fichte and Schelling in that he misses the differences between their systems and goes on to criticise him for not even being fully aware of the true task of philosophy itself. There is no question that by the year 1801 it was perfectly possible to see that Fichte and Schelling did not share the same philosophy; only Schelling's earliest writings were really dependent on Fichte and even in them fundamental innovations were not lacking. With the appearance in the year

1 Hegel, GW IV, 3–92; TW 2, 7–138. Cf. the English translation by H.S. Harris and W. Cerf.

2 K.L. Reinhold, *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens*—On the foundation of philosophical knowledge (1791), ed. W. Schrader, Hamburg 1978, p. 78.

1800 of Schelling's *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* it gradually became clear to Fichte that, as he explained in a letter he took a long time to write, Schelling was in error, he "had not penetrated" Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*—Theory of science, at all,<sup>3</sup> and Schelling was no real disciple of his. Roughly speaking the difference between Fichte and Schelling lies in the fact that while Fichte took it upon himself to demonstrate all external objectivity, everything outside of and opposed to consciousness, from the standpoint of consciousness itself, or better from the "subject-object", Schelling in his *System of transcendental Idealism* constructs two parallel series, one being the development of consciousness by itself and the other the development of nature, but this time also by itself and not from consciousness. Schelling's proposal included the idea of a genuinely "free" nature; for Fichte nature has sunk completely to a moment of the realisation of the I, but now it was being thought of anew according to its own logic and yet still generated by the same *unconditional* that also manifests as the self-conscious subject. This raises many questions. How do the two sides ultimately belong together or how are they congruent with each other? Above all exactly how is nature, while being an other of the subject, supposed to be amenable to determination if it is not as a whole a production of self-opposing consciousness? These issues were not really clarified by Schelling and it was problems like these that soon led him to reform his system. Nevertheless, Schelling had made an attempt to conceive of the determination of nature as at least relative self-determination, which means without intentional opposition by consciousness or subjectivity. He was trying to return a relative autonomy to nature making it possible to conceive of the self-development of nature as a category sequence that was not merely a by-product of the I's struggles with itself over its own process of becoming conscious of itself, but one strictly grounded in itself, i.e. in nature. Fichte saw all objectivity as a function of transcendental subjectivity, thus he "derived" all objects of consciousness from subjective self-consciousness, while Schelling assumed a "struggle between absolutely opposed activities" *within* self-consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Schelling regarded self-consciousness as originally divided into a "real" and an "ideal" activity, thus not so much as a principle of identity, or at least as much as that also a principle of difference. This recalls Hölderlin's attempt discussed above to differentiate himself from Fichte by grasping self-consciousness less as I-consciousness than much more (or certainly at least as much) as consciousness of being. It has already been

3 Fichte, *Brief an Schelling vom 31. Mai/7. August 1801*—letter to Schelling of 31 May/7 August 1801, GA III/5, 44.

4 Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, WW 11, 398. Cf. Peter Heath's translation in fn. 22, p. 47 above.

emphasised that Hegel never really was a Fichtean, that he never really adopted the standpoint of the I-philosophy, so now it is highly instructive to see exactly how he intervenes in the Fichte-Schelling controversy, to see what position he takes in relation to the question of self-consciousness.

The *Difference* essay, Hegel's first public appearance as a philosopher, begins with a bow to Kant, with the reminder namely, that with Kant philosophy ceased to be tied down to the letter of its texts. Characteristically, Hegel here connects that with Kant's conception of a deduction of the categories, with the programme of a critical derivation of the forms of our thinking from the principle of thinking itself. The categories, the forms of thought, are for Kant "object constitutive", i.e. without them we would have no determinate objectivity at all; the categories stand between the empty "I think" and the variously determinate world of our experience; thus, as the idealists liked to say especially since Reinhold's "principle of consciousness", they mediate subject and object and they do that from the standpoint of the subject. In this Fichte (we are speaking here of the early *Theory of Science*, as it first saw the light of day in 1794) understood Kant's programme of deduction consistently in material terms, i.e. he took the position that all the individual object-constitutive categories could be demonstrated from the original opposition of I and non-I, since drawing out this original opposition is the essence of the I itself. This is the sense in which the whole world in principle lies within the I, initially undeveloped, of course, and only becoming explicit in the I's objective activity. Hegel sees this as Fichte beginning with what is in principle an identity of subject and object, which is in its own terms rational; for a "reason" that did not comprise both sides, which then would not fundamentally include the possibility of the process of knowledge, would indeed be a wooden iron, a *non sequitur*. With the first definite opposition the I produces when it relates itself to an object, however, with the first step from self-consciousness to object-consciousness, the speculative original identity is abandoned. Set against the determinate object, the subject is no longer an identity, for it enters into objective difference, it becomes a "something" that begins to work on the other something, so it is no longer identical with itself, or with its *self*; all we have is that it *ought* to be so. In this Hegel grasped Fichte's approach, at least that of the early versions of the *Theory of Science*, correctly; Fichte always starts from a structural asymmetry of the subjective and the objective, an imbalance between subjectivity as the principle and objectivity as governed by that principle, which asymmetry makes the task of finding subjectivity again within objectivity or of deriving the latter from the former "without remainder" a never ending story. Thus Hegel designates Fichte's original identity a *subjective* subject-object. Schelling then sought to offer with his new philosophy of nature an *objective* subject-object to

stand beside Fichte's. Before he elaborates on this viewpoint, of which he gives an initial statement in the preface to the *Difference* essay, Hegel first gives some guidelines for philosophy in general. Above all he repudiates a merely historical approach to philosophy or philosophies, because it reduces it or them from a living *process of knowledge* into mere *facts* by extirpating the animating spirit.

The living spirit that dwells in a philosophy demands to be born of a kindred spirit if it is to unveil itself. It brushes past the historical approach, a sort of interest in information about opinions to which it is an alien phenomenon, without revealing what it holds within. (GW IV, 9)

In philosophy reason should speak to reason, reason should find itself and in that sense the chronological difference in the appearance of genuine philosophies is only of relative significance, "with respect to the inner essence of philosophy there are neither predecessors nor successors" (GW IV, 10). Neither is the history of philosophy a cabinet of curiosities of more or less peculiarly interesting *weltanschauungs* and *aperçus*. Just as artworks of different epochs are respectively wholly art, not just a little, just so is, as Hegel says, also "Every philosophy . . . complete in itself, and like an authentic work of art, has totality within itself." (GW IV, 12). Hegel is here aiming at the absolute, what is untouchable in every authentic philosophy. This absolute does not mean that a philosophy reaches what is supposed to be the definitive standpoint with the answer to all questions or that it even seeks to do anything of the sort. It means that every philosophy is an invitation to participate in a reason that can be represented in infinite variation, but which in these representations is certainly also always the same infinity—there is no plural of the word infinity and, in fact, nor for philosophy and one can only speak of philosophies in the plural by taking it, against Hegel's warning, as an object of external, merely historical study.

However that may be, philosophy for Hegel is always preceded by a "need for philosophy", a finitude, a division, a preliminary fixing in the "education and culture" of a given time. We know this topic already from Hegel's political writings, but also from the discussion of the relation between the finite form of the judgment and philosophical content; every political constitution, every logical judgment (in the former of freedom, in the latter of the judgment itself) is a commitment, a fixing to a specific form of its representation, which then emerges in opposition to the intended content, in comparison or conflict with which it can quickly become obsolete. Subject and object decay in ways specific to their respective times, their historical and intellectual or cultural contexts—the nature of alienation among the ancient Greeks is something quite

distinct from that in modern mass societies. Subjectively speaking, philosophy emerges from specific, finite divisions or alienations, it penetrates their logic and attempts to render them fluid, to point them in the direction of the infinite, the absolute.

Hegel speaks of reflection as the instrument of philosophy and once again he poses the question, as already in the *System fragment*, as to whether reflection is capable of “constructing” the absolute for consciousness. His provisional answer adopts Schelling’s proposed solution in his *System of transcendental Idealism*. Reflection is always guided by a kind of reason instinct oriented to totality, so the answer is: yes, it can lead to the absolute, but there is a condition. Reflection can lead to the absolute only on condition that in some way or other reflection’s conscious action can know itself to be overcome or “covered” by an unconscious action, that thinking and being are mediated and inherently a totality, that thinking does not simply run along beside being or along an image or representation of being, but knows itself to “contain being” and to be sustained by a relation that is not merely a conscious construction of thought. Hegel goes so far as to claim that the speculative method of philosophy demands “in its highest synthesis of the conscious and the non-conscious also the nullification of consciousness” (GW IV, 23). “Nullification of consciousness” does not simply mean “erasing” consciousness, but rather its downgrading to a mere moment of a higher unity that also includes the other of consciousness, what is not consciousness. The basic idea here is that consciousness is structurally as such unavoidably a principle of opposition or division; one does not only *have* a consciousness of objects, but consciousness *is as such* the having of objects, the act of setting oneself in opposition to the objective world, it is the fixing of an opposition, which can only then in a second move be overcome through conscious reflection—but which in fact can never be overcome because every reflection renews the construction of the opposition of consciousness. Fichte’s promise had been through ever more potentiated reflection, through ever renewed reflection of reflection ultimately to attain the absolute subject-object unity. Schelling and Hegel here point out that the standpoint within reflection leads only to a potentiation of consciousness and with that only to a formalisation of subjectivity that can never break out of its imprisonment in the cage of reflection, in the standpoint of division. In the *System fragment* reflecting consciousness was replaced by religious consciousness, here in the *Difference* essay it is a “midday of life” which, beyond the condition of mere awareness, is supposed to reconcile consciousness and what is not conscious. Later in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel will demonstrate the extent to which existing (not merely formal) self-consciousness in fact is *more* than consciousness, for it includes the life of a consciousness as well as

the consciousness of a life. Here also then philosophy should be the life thinking itself and not simply thoughts about life.

A few examples of the forms of argumentation in the *Difference* essay must suffice here. Hegel opposes, for instance, any attempt to ground philosophy on axioms, first principles or definitions. Sentences and axioms are products of reflection and as such do not give appropriate expression to the standpoint of totality that philosophy must adopt. In the place of axioms appears now very forcefully—with Fichte and Schelling—a “transcendental intuition”, a total intuition, one could say, in which knowledge and what is known immediately participate in each other and in fact are one and the same. Such a total or transcendental intuition cannot articulate itself in individual sentences standing isolated and alone beside each other—it craves a system and consequently it is with systems that Fichte and Schelling busy themselves. This intuition is “transcendental” because it cannot be satisfied or confirmed by anything empirical, because it has an infinite content which is not to be reached from a finite position. Reason as such, not this or that reason, intuits here, making the totality accessible to itself. The basic intuition is still an intuition and not a concept, not a reflection, because the whole should be given as a whole, which clearly cannot be done discursively, not by passing from one concept to another; instead it must consist in the anticipation of the endpoint of the whole pathway. The discursive path, that of mediation from concept to concept, never exhausts the totality, never reaches the end of the path. A simple example works here. A man tries to give a general account of the horse by looking at every horse one after the other and describing them. Not only does he never reach the end, he also overlooks the fact that he has employed an intuition of what it is to be a horse that he has to recognise in the living things he describes in order to determine that the individuals are indeed examples of what he is looking for. For Hegel—and he shares the view at this time with Fichte and Schelling—before it gets down to expressing itself in detail, before it becomes discursive, philosophy must start with a fundamental transcendental intuition. With this we can better understand what it means to say that “in the highest synthesis” of philosophy the conscious—i.e. the realm of what is discursively mediated, the realm of reflection—and the non-conscious—and for that we can now substitute: what cannot be discursively covered—should be unified, which is the sense in which consciousness itself is to be overcome into a higher unity. For the later Hegel this higher unity, which is not at all as miraculous as it might at first sound to consciousness and to the understanding, will be *spirit*—and spirit will then be a unity in which many consciousnesses will find their places, a unity which first makes understandable what it means that consciousnesses can form a unity as a kind of community.

We do not yet encounter Hegel's philosophy of spirit in the *Difference* essay. Here he is more concerned with other systems, initially with Fichte's. One can say that Fichte's philosophy is a philosophy of reflection, but with the important qualification that it does not begin from the subject-object opposition in finite consciousness, as Rheinhold's does. Fichte's starting point is rather absolute reflection, the pure, free act, Fichte's "fact-act" of the  $I = I$ , as he himself says. Fichte assumes that all objectivity, all external being only exists and has significance to the extent that it is for pure subjectivity. Pure subjectivity is relation to itself and in fact nothing else besides this. But then, in that the fact-act is relation to itself, it differentiates itself into the relating and the related, it differentiates itself formally into subject and object and in this formal difference, in this self-opposition, lies for Fichte the origin of the objective world. The world that the subject has is nothing other than subjectivity objectively articulated, subjectivity referenced to the objective. We understand this provisionally in the following terms, the  $I$ , pure subjectivity is the real focus of the meaning of the world and everything that is supposed to be capable of claiming significance in an utterance must be amenable to reference back to this first and absolute light source, this "sun-glade" of the  $I$ .

It is, however, very important here to draw a distinction that we also find in Kant. It is not the empirical  $I$  to which this function as principle is assigned. Neither Jane Public nor Johann Gottlieb Fichte in their contingent  $I$ -identity constitute the semantic focus of the world. Only the form of the  $I$  as such can function as principle, it is Kant's transcendental ego, which Fichte then asserts to be the real ground of the world as such. Jane Public and Johann Gottlieb Fichte are, in contrast, what they are as individuals only in the framework of an already existing objective world, in which then also the  $I$  understands itself objectively, i.e. empirically. At this point a very large problem emerges. What does it mean to say that the pure  $I$  also understands itself as empirical, understands itself in the form of an object of the world and thus effectively as a thing? Does this not mean that the pure  $I$  within the world it generates out of itself must always miss itself therein? Yes, indeed, that is exactly what it means, says Fichte. And for this reason it is not enough that philosophy delineates the path from the pure  $I$  to the empirical  $I$ , "constructing" the steps from absolute to empirical reflection. This is what makes philosophy narrowly defined "theory of science", the science of the origin and the forms and contents of possible knowledge in general. Philosophy must, however, also reveal the deficits of finite knowledge, of finite subjectivity and the finite objectivity—our given world—corresponding to it. Philosophy must remind us that each relation in which an empirical  $I$  sets itself to an empirical world is a misalliance in which the  $I$  risks itself and its own freedom. This is what makes Fichte's

philosophy essentially practically oriented, the *ought* is more original than being, the ought is the call of the pure I to the empirical I not to enter into any final linkage with the finite, but constantly to overcome it, to make it ever more congruent with reason.

Let us remind ourselves briefly of the main difference between Fichte's insight on the one hand and Hegel's own initiative starting from life as the encompassing unity. For Fichte, as we said, the dominant thing is a fundamental asymmetry between the form of subjectivity and its objective self-articulation. The I always comes first and the world always second; the I is the condition for meaning, the world is conditioned meaningfulness; the I is understanding and the world is what is understood. Hegel did not simply turn all this on its head claiming that the world is first given and then comes, conditioned by it, the I and the knowledge of the world. That would have been a disastrous regression behind Kant, a revival of dogmatism, of which Hegel says in the *Difference* essay that it, dogmatism, is just as tied to finite consciousness as "dogmatic idealism" (GW IV, 40). Hegel's aim is rather to find a balance or a settlement between the two sides, to overcome the asymmetry and replace it with a kind of simultaneity, a common process of overcoming into a higher unity. Reflection, subjectivity, is a moment of life and so is what it reflects; what happens then is a process of mutual determination of the two sides. This makes it easy to understand Hegel when in the *Difference* essay he criticises Fichte for having reduced nature to "absolute objectivity" and thus regarding it exclusively in the finite opposition standing against the I and thus *de facto* understanding it as something "dead" (cf. GW IV, 51). Hegel fears that Kant too occasionally does "violence" to nature, robbing it of its autonomy. It is a fact that in comprehending all thought of an implicit self-mediation of the natural world, of a "subjective" focus to natural teleology in the sense of nature taking itself as its own purpose, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant immediately imposes the caveat of the "as-if". Kant and Fichte only know nature as reflected nature, not as a moment of life or as the self-presentation of life itself. Hegel fears that this attitude adversely affects Fichte's practical philosophy when the "systems of the community of human beings" (GW IV, 54) should be considered according to its provisions. Human communities and their conditions, systems of laws and the forms of ethical association, taken as nothing but objectified I can only appear as reflection systems. The common lifeworld of human beings, the state, for instance, is deduced by Fichte essentially in the same way as nature is deduced. Moreover, and this is decisive for Hegel, "every truly free, for itself infinite and unlimited, i.e. beautiful mutual relation of *life*" (ibid., my emphasis), every lived form of ethical life—we can also say, every genuine culture and form of spiritual or intellectual community

among men—in Fichte's hands falls victim to a political-ethical rationalism. For instance, Fichte tries to deduce the necessity for IDs with an image of the bearer from *a priori* principles (cf. GW IV, 56 fn.), and this is only an example of the way Fichte as a philosopher of reflection is necessarily driven into a discursive process delving ever deeper into the details without ever arriving at the wholeness and richness of life. Fichte begins with the intellectual intuition, but is then constantly driven away from it into the sustained affirmation of thinking confined to the understanding. He starts with the subject-object, but always ends up getting stuck in one or the other particular finite fixed division of the two. This is why Hegel looks around for a philosophical alternative and finds it, as you might expect, in Schelling.

Hegel thinks that Schelling builds his whole philosophy on an “absolute principle of identity”. Absolute identity is for Schelling not a subjective identity or an instinct of the subject to identify itself in all objectivity. Instead Schelling conceives of it as the original identity of subject and object as such. The two come together in one, just two sides of one and the same identity. This is why Schelling adds an objective subject-object to Fichte's subjective subject-object. The former is nature and the two essentially come together in the same “absolute indifference point”. The absolute, designated by this indifference point, is the overcoming of the identifying subjective movement and the differentiating objective movement into each other. It is, as the formula we have already quoted has it, “the identity of identity and non-identity” (GW IV, 94). The articulation of the one absolute no longer happens in one single discipline, but in two, running effectively in parallel. Schelling distinguishes transcendental philosophy on the one hand, in which, as Hegel writes, subject is substance and nature or the object is accident, from natural philosophy on the other, in which nature is the absolute substance and its concept or the subject is the accident, in order to combine the two disciplines. Basically this amounts to the attempt to adopt both transcendental and dogmatic standpoints together, while the only thing preventing a regression back into actual dogmatism is that, crucially, natural philosophy here must be transcendental philosophy in the mode of objective difference, i.e. in reflected opposition against subjective transcendental philosophy. Still the possibility is generally conceded to nature of expressing absolute unity on its own. Hegel says that for Schelling nature is not just matter, but is actually subject-object (cf. GW IV, 70); it is characterised by an “immanent ideality” (GW IV, 71), an essential intelligibility; it is not merely the *stuff* of our knowledge, but is in its essence *itself* always also intelligible. This is why, for instance, in nature there is not only necessity but also freedom; freedom at least in the sense that we speak of free motions or the freedom of an animal living in “free nature”, in the wild and not in a cage. The

aspects of freedom in this sense indicate that there is a hidden subjectivity in nature and that it is not exhausted in the representation of nature as objective, set opposed to us. The difference with the transcendental sphere is only that in nature freedom or intelligibility happens “without consciousness”, while in knowledge it is consciously present. The indifference point of the two sides, which Schelling sees as the highest point that can be attained in philosophy, is then the “turning point” of the two disciplines and simultaneously the point of equilibrium of the conscious and the non-conscious. The philosophy that aspires to take up this standpoint must comprehend that it is only a subjective interpretation of the absolute and consequently is required to go beyond the limits set by its own form. Schelling says at the end of the *System of transcendental Idealism* that the absolute identity is “simply not objective” and as such is necessarily not discursive, that it cannot be grasped in concepts. The objectification of what is seen in the intellectual intuition is then to be found in “aesthetic intuition”. Schelling’s conception of the artwork is the decisive instance meeting Hegel’s demand for a highest synthesis of the conscious and the non-conscious. Consciousness cannot do it alone, nor can mere will, neither is technical skill sufficient to produce a work of art; in the work of art, says Schelling, infinity itself speaks. He goes on to say that “art is the only true and eternal organon that is also a document of philosophy which constantly attests anew to what philosophy externally cannot represent, namely the non-conscious elements in behaviour and production and its original identity with what is conscious”.<sup>5</sup> At this point Hegel deviates from Schelling slightly in that beside art he places religion (we recall the *System fragment* of 1800) as well as philosophical speculation. Indeed, in his further development Hegel will not seek the conclusion of philosophy anywhere else but in art, religion and above all in philosophy—in the *Phenomenology* it is “absolute knowing”—as the form of absolute spirit in which the pinnacle and the conclusion is reached.

At the end of the *Difference* essay Hegel seeks to avoid misunderstandings by insisting that Fichte’s philosophy, although its one-sidedness has been described in detail, is nevertheless “an authentic product of speculation” (GW IV, 77). It failed to confront the subjective transcendental intuition with an objective one. The task is now to understand both sides as the two “highest manifestations of absolute, self-intuiting reason” as summed up in the last sentence of the essay. “These two opposites, they are variously called I and nature, pure and empirical self-consciousness, knowing and being, self-setting and setting in opposition, finite and infinite—are set or posited together in the absolute and in this antinomy common reflection sees nothing but

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5 Schelling, *ibid.*, p. 628.

contradiction; only reason sees in this absolute contradiction the truth, the contradiction in which both are posited and both are nullified, in which at once neither is and both are" (ibid.). This last assertion—they both are and are *not* simultaneously—contains a dialectical form of the problem posed by Schelling which he himself will not pursue further. Hegel pursued it further precisely at this point where, in order to find expression for the totality, the contradiction is not simply to be reluctantly accepted, but becomes unavoidable.

### 3 Habilitation

After finishing the *Difference* essay Hegel got immediately down to work on his habilitation and his application was granted in the summer of 1801. He chose a topic in the philosophy of nature, more precisely in cosmology, that is astronomy in the perspective of the philosophy of nature. The title is *Dissertatio Philosophica de Orbitis Planetarum*—Philosophical Dissertation on the Orbits of the Planets.<sup>6</sup> Here we shall confine ourselves to some of the basic aspects concerning the issue of nature in Hegel's philosophical development.<sup>7</sup> The text is perhaps most accessible if we regard it as Hegel taking the planetary system as an example to consider the question, what exactly does it mean to say that we can know nature? If Hegel were a Fichtean then this question would not arise. For Fichte, as we have seen, nature, indeed all objectivity, is only a moment of the process by which the absolute I becomes objective to itself. Nature is, as Fichte says more than once, "just a particular manner in which I view myself".<sup>8</sup> Hegel shared with Schelling the idea of a relative autonomy, a relative freedom of nature in its opposition to the I and any kind of

6 Hegel, GW V, 233–253.

7 Those interested in further study of this topic should consult the edition published by W. Neuser, *Hegel, Dissertatio Philosophica de Orbitis Planetarum*, Weinheim 1986. Neuser provides the Latin text, a German translation, and useful background information in the introduction and the commentary, especially on the state of astronomy in Hegel's time. Cf. Pierre Adler's English translation in *Philosophical Dissertation on the Orbits of the Planets* and the *Habilitation Theses* in Jon Stewart ed. *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, Evanston 2002.

8 Fichte, *Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Principien der Wissenschaftslehre* (1798) § 10, p. 127, J.G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Gliwitzky and Erich Fuchs, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1964 ff., abbreviated to GA, here GA vol. 1/5. Cf. the English translation in *The System of Ethics according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*. ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöller. Cambridge, 2005, p. 127.

reflection system in which the I becomes objective to itself. So what does it mean under this assumption to say that nature is knowable? Not only in natural science, but also in our everyday practical interaction with nature we make the assumption that the concepts of nature we fashion for ourselves are not empty; anyone who assumes that apples do not normally grow on cherry trees assumes also that nature in some sense or other operates according to 'logical' rules, most generally according to the principle of identity  $A = A$ , which says a cherry tree is a cherry tree. One can of course make it easy on oneself and assume that it is that way according to all 'experience', as we say. But this does not really explain anything; we still do not understand how this can be, that it is possible with nature to have logically more or less consistent experience. Hegel formulates the question here in the following terms. What does it mean that nature presents itself in such a logically ordered form as our galaxy? What does it mean that matter presents itself in the shape of such an extraordinarily stable cosmic system, such that it was possible for a Kepler to capture the motions of these masses in this system in actual laws? Hegel sees the common opinion in modern natural science on this question encapsulated in the claim that in nature in some form mathematical laws, or laws amenable to mathematical formulation, are constitutive, or that the first principle in nature is—as the ancient Pythagoreans claimed—number and numerical relations, mathematical proportion. Galileo, the founder of modern natural science, said in this spirit that the "language", in which "the awesome book" of the universe is written is that of "mathematics".<sup>9</sup> Newton's physics, starting from very similar premisses, came to the conclusion that the mathematical reconstruction of a natural phenomenon, such as gravitation, was the real knowledge of it; sufficiently many experiences (per induction) will bring the physicist here to a relation capable of mathematical formulation or in plain language to a law of nature, which then in some form or other contains the *truth of nature*.

On this point Hegel is very sceptical. In the *Dissertatio* he questions whether with mathematical reconstruction of nature in fact *nature* is known or whether merely tools are made available to describe, order and make predictions about the phenomena as they externally present themselves. When Newton reconstructs the motion of a body on a circular course with the help of the assumption of a centrifugal and a contrary centripetal force, then these two opposed forces are for Hegel not natural phenomena, but theoretical phenomena, auxiliary constructs for the mathematical reconstruction of the only actually existing motion, which is the natural event of the motion on the curved path. Newton is in a certain sense, as he himself emphasises, an

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9 Galileo Galilei, *Il saggiaiore*, in: *Opere complete* vol. 4, Florence 1844, 171.

“idealist”, for he believes that it is what is mathematical in nature, the mathematical “principles” of the knowledge of nature, that is genuinely real and constitutes the determining factor. Hegel says that this approach understands really existing nature *as such* in fact as something dead. Newton regards matter as purely mechanistic precisely because mechanism is the decisive formal assumption required to represent nature mathematically. Matter then contains nothing in it that is intelligible; rather the mathematical form is as it were simply laid upon it—not arbitrarily, of course, but effectively such that the being of nature is determined by the ideality of numbers and numerical relations. We will encounter this criticism of modern natural science again later in Hegel’s development. One of the decisive differences between natural science and the philosophy of nature for Hegel is that the latter seeks to conceptualise the dimension of the natural not only as lawful, but also in those aspects which resist reduction to the formulation of laws, while natural science investigates nature with a view to the greatest possible identification, focussing on its amenability to translation into the form of law. Here are some indications briefly as to how Hegel in his dissertation sees in natural philosophy the alternative to mathematised nature. The galaxy is for Hegel not simply a composite of “masses plus forces”, but concretely filled, dense space (“*spatium densum*”, cf. GW V, 249). In this sense it is as such objective, an external existence, an existence that is in itself more than merely extension (of matter) or opposition (the literal meaning of *ob-jectivity*, here of forces). The galaxy is a space realising itself as motion, setting its own (especially internal) limits. It is a unity comprising an internal plurality, or conversely a plurality, a diversity, representing itself through motion as a unity. The galaxy is not space in general, but a concretely individualised space chronologically articulating *itself* and, as Hegel says, in time revealing something like its own *subjectivity*, its interiority. The most important issue for the philosophy of nature in understanding the galaxy, as Hegel sees it, does not lie in determining a dead object externally in terms of the parameters of space and time. It is that this object generates its own spatial and chronological existence according to its own law. The orbit is not external to the planet; the planet is what it is only by describing precisely *this* orbit occupying particular positions at specific times. The orbit is of course only an ideal magnitude, but one which, as dense space chronologically articulating itself, constantly and with great precision generates itself anew. In contrast to Newton’s centrifugal and centripetal forces, the planet orbit is not a diagram drawn solely by us in order to render given phenomena measurable. The heavenly body *constructs* itself on the orbit it describes, outside of which it would not be a planet; it constructs the inner unity, the self of a nature, which certainly primarily or immediately appears as a manifold, as objectivity, while

even in that fully asserting a hidden self. We will see later in the philosophy of nature of the *Encyclopaedia* that Hegel's basic idea in the study of nature is not so much to find natural laws—the natural sciences do that—as to study the appearances of nature in terms of their own weightings, their inner self-like character and to systematise them in those terms. Now the fact that nature exhibits this “subjectivity” (GW V, 249), this inflexion back to itself, and is not simply a linear-objective structure, tells us why nature is fundamentally *knowable*. Nature can be seen as itself producing ideal structures and moments of identity and this identity is what lets it be known. For example, we recognise Jupiter by the fact that it only appears at specific positions in the night sky, its own positions, not here and there where just now Mercury was. Such considerations in his dissertation make it possible for Hegel to speak of an “*identitas rationis et naturae*” (cf. GW V, 252), of an identity of reason and nature, which we then do not simply assume, but which now lies in the concept of nature itself to the extent that nature rationally structures and produces itself. Hegel tries in this way to understand that nature is more than a mere dark substrate obedient to given natural laws external to it. He wants to overcome the difference in the conception of natural law between form and material and to think of both as moments of one and the same self. Apart from the suggestions Hegel receives here from Schelling, the reference to the concept of life and its logic is not to be missed. In a certain sense—a restricted sense to be sure—even the galaxy appears as a life or a living thing and it is almost as if Hegel wanted to revive the old Platonic notion of the cosmos as a whole as one great living being.<sup>10</sup> It should be clear by now, however, that Hegel is not in the business of manufacturing new myths. Hegel's work on the concept of a nature that is of itself intelligible is rather fully in line with a central principle of his whole philosophical initiative. This is the idea that in reality only that which is essentially characterised by self-relation can stand open to the process of knowing, precisely because knowing itself is nothing if not self-related; that only that which *lives* identity is also ‘identifiable’ and manifest. The principle of the *convertibility* of substantiality and subjectivity, which we will get to know in the *Phenomenology* and which finds its conclusive explication in the *Science of Logic*, is first expressed here. It is crucial to note that this is an idea Hegel does not get from Kant or Fichte or Schelling, but which is all his own. Whatever else it may deal with, everything in his philosophy will be concerned with this principle, either openly or concealed but always centrally. The “horrors of objectivity” are overcome only when objectivity is not seen as heterogeneous to the subjective, but is known as grounded in it.

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<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Timaios* 30 b.

A strange misfortune befell Hegel with his habilitation, which we must briefly address here, although these matters lie on a completely different level from the basic principles of the philosophy of nature addressed by the *Dissertatio*. The anecdote that in his dissertation Hegel proved *a priori* that between the fourth and the fifth planets of our galaxy, i.e. between Mars and Jupiter, there cannot be another planet is still so often repeated. Unfortunately, however, on New Year's Day that year, 1801, that is some months before Hegel's supposed proof of the impossibility of such a discovery, the astronomer Giuseppe Piazzi (1746–1826) in Palermo discovered Ceres—and indeed precisely there where it was not supposed to be, namely approximately in the middle between Mars and Jupiter. If it were true, that anecdote would be worthy of inclusion in the collection of those genial stories of philosophers, whose prototype is Thales of Milet. Every popular history of philosophy includes the story of him walking with his face turned upward, his eyes fixed on the heavens, studying the stars, when a young woman of Thrace passes by and, with great amusement, sees him walk straight into a ditch. In fact the anecdote about Hegel is not true at all, indeed it is wrong on several points. The real situation is as follows. At the end of his dissertation, Hegel briefly takes up the question of the displacements between the planet orbits; this is just an appendix in reference to a contemporary discussion in astronomy. In the eighteenth century the two astronomers Johann Daniel Titius (1729–1796) and Johann Elert Bode (1747–1826) attempted to formulate a fixed relation for the displacements of the planet orbits, the so-called Titius-Bode series. Their formula of a kind of arithmetical progression in the displacements required a further planet to stand between Mars and Jupiter, where only a great void had been observed. Taking the distance between earth and sun as the measure, the distance between Mars and Jupiter is approximately 3.7 times that, while the distance between earth and Mars is only about half. The Titius-Bode series is a typical example of the procedure in the newer, constructive natural science of their time. The result of their arithmetical speculations was that a large number of astronomers, nick-named the “police force of the heavens”, went to work to find the required planet and in 1801 Piazzi spotted something that was not really a fully formed planet, but still a heavenly body with a diameter of approximately 930 km, Ceres, which is today included under the “planetoids”. Initially at least the Titius-Bode series appeared to have been confirmed, but that impression did not last. The discovery of Neptune in 1846, a planet beyond Uranus, threw the series off; but more importantly soon after that lots of planetoids were found and today, as one can read in the astronomy textbooks, their number is around 50,000, many with diameters under 1 km, many also on eccentric orbits, and, another fact that is not without interest, the total mass of them all is less than that of the earth's

moon. For a while it was believed that the so-called planetoid band in which Ceres lies is the result of the breakdown into fragments of what was originally a real planet. That theory is today obsolete; it is the enormous gravitation of Jupiter, with a mass approximately 318 times that of the earth, which prevents any real planet from lying in this position. So far, so good, but what did Hegel really say on this question? He said initially that the Titius-Bode series as a purely arithmetical progression is philosophically without interest and that nevertheless, as Hegel expressly mentions, astronomers were working hard to confirm it. This corresponds to his view (in fact also found in Leibniz), that merely quantitative regularities do not allow the leap to postulating real existence in nature. Heuristic principles, no matter how well thought out, are still not real grounds for the existence of natural phenomena. Hegel goes one step further and formulates the hypothesis that a geometric progression *could* work better than the Titius-Bode series, as Plato showed all those centuries ago in his dialogue *Timaios*. Hegel gives a computation procedure that produces a series of displacements, which, including the gap between Mars and Jupiter, would correspond to the known situation.<sup>11</sup> It is all written quite clearly as an afterword in which Hegel, based on Kepler, suggests an alternative to the Titius-Bode arithmetic series (which in current reference books is considered as only coincidentally corresponding to a part of the planet displacements), an alternative that accounts for the gap between Mars and Jupiter, which, despite the abundance of microplanets that has emerged since then, still remains a huge gap. He justifies his own hypothesis by saying that geometrical progressions express quantitative self-relations and as such are better than linear number series to represent self-like entities such as natural phenomena. Now anyone who is not satisfied with the fact that on balance Hegel was right to reject the Titius-Bode series (and that was the issue), or indeed that to an extent he was also right against Piazzi—for Ceres and her 50,000 friends are rather “accidental” components than constitutive moments of the galaxy—anyone who is not satisfied with the fact that he only hypothetically introduced his alternative proposal, finally, whoever is not pacified by all this may wish to take note of

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11 Hegel, cf. GW V, 252: “... in utroque Timaeo servatam numerorum seriem afferre liceat, quos Timaeus, non ad Planetas quidem refert, sed ad quorum rationem Demiurgum Universum conformavisse censet. . . . Quae series si verior naturae ordo sit quam illa arithmetica progressio . . .” Adler’s translation p. 193: “. . . this gives us license to adduce a series of numbers handed down to us and preserved in both *Timaeus* texts. To be sure, Timaeus does not link them with the planets, but he deems that the demiurge conformed the universe to their relation. . . . If this series is an order of nature truer than the arithmetical progression . . .”

the fact that in his *Philosophy of Nature*, the lectures he gave much later in Berlin, Hegel names the planetoids discovered up to that point—Ceres, Pallas, Juno and Vesta—in order then to conclude that in their position, which clearly constitutes a caesura between the inner and the outer planetary systems, “fragmentation, scattering predominates” and that nature thus tends to move against indeterminate multiplicity.<sup>12</sup> In view of all of this then, it is clearly high time to stop spreading these anecdotes and instead to study the text—and there remains a lot to be done in that regard.

#### 4 Habilitation Theses

The first publication of the *Dissertatio* includes the theses Hegel defended in the oral examination.<sup>13</sup> At first glance some of them appear to be very paradoxical indeed; others, in contrast, are not at all difficult to understand given what we have already worked through. The first statement is an anticipation of the later theory of the contradiction. *Contradictio est regula veri, non contradictio falsi*—contradiction is the standard of truth, non-contradiction that of untruth. This means here that only what is capable of taking up contradiction into it is actually real; whatever does not contradict itself only exists formally. It is for example formally a contradiction that a living being is at once individual, this one, and universal, existing life as such, that it is also the actual existence of a particular species. But if one of the two sides is taken away and the living being is only an individual in abstract difference to its species and to life, or if life only persists as a universal that does not move from itself out into the differentiation of living beings, then neither reach actually living beings and actual life, for both remain formal abstractions. For Hegel nothing exists that would be solely and purely identical without including difference within it and already this, that the identical only exists as different and that both motions, the identifying and the differentiating, can only happen simultaneously, is already the contradiction inherent in all true being. What is not meant here is that on the formal level we have to construct our concepts so that they all include contradictions. But then formal concepts are not simply true without further ado; they are only true in relation to their content, and it is in this relation that the contradiction *must* appear.

The second thesis is *Syllogismus est principium Idealismi*—the syllogism is the principle of idealism. Kant said that the form of reason is the syllogism and

<sup>12</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 270 Addition.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel, GW V, 227 f.; TW 2, 533. English: see fn. 7, p. 99 above.

that the ideas of reason are all syllogisms;<sup>14</sup> reason is not to be found in individual concepts or judgments, propositions, but only in the system of concepts and judgments. The system is ideally or typically prefigured in the syllogism as the achievement of a unity from a plurality, the return into the whole, and this motion is what Hegel calls idealism or simply philosophy.

The sixth statement reminds us of what we know at the latest since the *System fragment*. *Idea est synthesis infiniti et finiti et philosophia omnis est in ideis*—the idea is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite and all philosophy lies in the ideas, i.e. in such syntheses. This is again a reference to the standpoint of totality, to the identity of the universal and the individual as in life, indeed to the identity of identity and non-identity, without which according to Hegel there is no philosophy.

Finally another statement critical of Kant is the seventh thesis. *Philosophia critica caret ideis et imperfecta est Scepticismi forma*—the critical philosophy lacks the ideas and is an incomplete form of scepticism. Lacking the ideas, the critical philosophy does not reach the synthesis demanded earlier, it fails to resolve *anagogically* the antinomy to which it itself leads, it fails to rise into totality. An incomplete form of scepticism, Kant's philosophy does not push reflection to the ultimate extreme. Kant does not, like complete scepticism, drive reflection into pure non-knowing or into the nihilism of knowledge, but leaves it standing half way. His is a reflection philosophy which resists the real negative power of reflection. He remains on the level of the judgment, the proposition with its separation of subject and object, although he postulates, formally at least, the idea of reason and with it the gathering logos, which certainly does elevate itself beyond the sceptical crisis of subjective knowing. In the interests of the critique, Kant makes assumptions like the difference between intuition and concept or that between the form and content of knowing, which themselves are not subjected to the critique. His philosophy comes down to a theory of objectification in which the grounding of identification in the terms of natural science is thought through, but in which no place is provided for the living, logical self. Hegel has by now been sure of his principles long enough to know that he is not a real Kantian. In the texts we turn to next, the most important contributions to the *Kritische Journal der Philosophie*, further work is done on the construction of his own non-Kantian philosophy.

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14 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 330 ff./ B 386 ff.

## 5      *The Critical Journal*

The introduction to this journal is a programmatic statement Hegel and Schelling wrote together under the title *Über das Wesen der Philosophischen Kritik überhaupt*—On the essence of philosophical critique as such.<sup>15</sup> Hegel and Schelling assume that it would be senseless to start a review magazine for philosophy without a standard against which philosophy as such, and that means independent of the subjective form in which it appears, can be measured. This standard consists in the fact that philosophy appears as a knowledge of the absolute, or as returning finitude to totality, as a rational synthesis and mediation of difference. Philosophy as such is reason knowing itself, but reason is essentially “one . . . and as little as it is possible that there be different reasons, just as little can there be a wall between reason and its self-knowing making them essentially different” (GW IV, 117). In that sense it is just as senseless to try to discuss works critically that do not share this normative idea of philosophy; critique would otherwise have to restrict itself to recounting arbitrarily chosen parts of the content to show that they lack the idea of philosophy and that the whole is thus “banal” (GW IV, 119). In contrast, critique does find something to refer to with genuinely philosophical works, those that follow the orientation to the self-knowledge of reason so that “from the inherent genuine direction” of such a work it can try to “refute . . . the limitations of the form” in which philosophy appears there (ibid.). With such statements Hegel and Schelling turn against the trend of their times, which regards philosophy as a matter of subjective particularity, of originality. After the disappearance of the traditional standard philosophy along with metaphysics, the disappearance that is of the so-called school-philosophy, the trend of the times acknowledges every man’s wish to be his own philosopher and now everyone wants to propagate his “*own philosophy*” (GW IV, 121). This appears to Hegel and Schelling rather as the:

... drama of the sufferings of the damned, who are either eternally bound to their limitation or cling to one limitation after another, expressing wonder at them all only to be forced to discard them one after the other. It is the drama of the free maturing of diverse living forms in the philosophical gardens of Greece. (ibid.)

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15      Hegel, GW IV, 117–128; TW 2, 171–187; cf. English translation by H.S. Harris in Jon Stewart ed. *Miscellaneous writings of G.W.F. Hegel*. GW page numbers not included.

The two publishers of the *Critical Journal* proceed further in this vein against the opinion that it is the task of the philosophical writer to make philosophy “popular or even common and accessible” (GW IV, 124). Against the urge to “level out” philosophy, as Hegel and Schelling expressly say, which is seen by contemporaries as a “valuable task”, they insist first that for the common understanding philosophy can never be anything other than an “inverted world” (GW IV, 125), for the principles, the forms of thought taken as immediately and unquestionably valid by healthy common sense can in no way be considered appropriate to make philosophy a science of the absolute. The genuinely philosophical demand that so-called healthy common sense give an account of the categories in which it commonly thinks, that it move from an unreflected application of the categories to a reflection on this application is disconcerting to it, which is why it finds philosophy alien and incomprehensible and insists that philosophy must be made understandable. This is clearly meant as a modest request by finite thinking on philosophy, that it should present itself in the forms of finite thinking and set itself on an equal footing with healthy common sense, but it must be rejected by philosophy. When confronting this demand philosophy is always something “by its nature . . . esoteric” (GW IV, 124) and that not *despite* being a science of reason, but rather *because* it is that. One does not arrive at reason unless the images, representations and opinions one has immediately in mind have been mixed up and thrown into confusion—Socrates knew it too—and philosophy can spare nobody the pain of having to break with what is merely factually understood as valid.

## 6      Scepticism Ancient and Modern

This is the point at which scepticism for Hegel becomes a necessary component of philosophy, even if it is as such not really philosophy itself. In March 1802 in the second part of the first volume of the *Journal*, Hegel published a programmatic essay on this issue under the title *Verhältnis des Skeptizismus zur Philosophie, Darstellung seiner verschiedenen Modifikationen, und Vergleichung des neuesten mit dem alten*—Relation of scepticism to philosophy, discussion of its various modifications and comparison of the latest form with that of the ancients.<sup>16</sup> The reference point for this essay is initially the scepticism

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<sup>16</sup> Hegel, GW IV, 197–238; TW 2, 213–272; cf H.S. Harris trans. Hegel, *The relationship of scepticism to philosophy*, in G. di Giovanni and H.S. Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, New York 1985, 311–362, GW page numbers included.

of Gottlob Ernst Schulze (1761–1833), who was famous under the name of Aenesidemus, taken from the title of his first publication, which was critical of Kant. In a work published in 1801 entitled *Kritik der theoretischen Philosophie*, Schulze undertook the attempt on the one hand to refute every dogmatic assertion “of hyperphysical things” and with that to make speculative philosophy impossible, while simultaneously seeking to ground philosophy on the facts of consciousness, that is ultimately on healthy common sense. Schulze remarks that every attempt to go beyond tangible things and to rise to an unconditional has failed, i.e. he holds the view that experience shows that philosophy leads to nothing anyway, a view one can encounter just about everywhere. Hegel reacts to Schulze’s scepticism, which is a kind of dogmatic agnosticism, in a very interesting manner. His main point of criticism is that one should perhaps not call oneself a ‘sceptic’ unless one is, in the spirit of scepticism, serious about moving against one’s own understanding, against those apparently fixed facts of consciousness. Hegel reminds us that scepticism played a very important role in ancient philosophy and indeed already in Plato. But then that ancient and radical scepticism turned against exactly what Schulze holds to be the Archimedean point of philosophy, the finite imagination. Ancient scepticism consisted essentially in demonstrating the contradiction in the finite images and representations that men make for themselves. Its principle was *isostheneia* (ἰσοσθένεια τῶν λόγων, *isostheneia ton logon*), to every statement or every concept an equally strong statement or concept stands against it and the one cannot do anything against the other (παντὶ λόγῳ λόγος ἴσος ἀντίκειται, *panti logoi logos isos antikeitai*) (GW IV, 208).<sup>17</sup> In ancient times some drew ‘relativist’ consequences from this principle (e.g. the sophists, especially Protagoras as Plato describes him in *Theaetetus*) as well as genuinely sceptical consequences (e.g. the so-called middle academy or Pyrrhonism). We should not forget that this principle returns in Kant’s antinomies of reason. Hegel insists that when seen clearly this principle is not an opponent but an ingredient of philosophy. Philosophy destroys finite thinking by forcing it to recognise the contradiction it generates in pursuing the consequences of any given principle; real philosophy emerges first out of the loss of the immediacy of opinions, it does not speak in simple ‘theses’. We will find that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel lets the distinct levels of consciousness develop themselves out of each other with each successive one sceptically overcoming its predecessor. In the *Science of Logic* he has the individual categories precisely progressing via their respective *determinate* negation and building a system that has them relating ‘critically’ to each other. Scepticism is thus the general weapon of philosophy

17 Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhonische Hypotyposen* I, 6; cf. also I, 27.

against imagination or representational thinking, against the merely positive concept that has cut itself off from its own genesis and its systematic embedding. Scepticism contains and activates the negation as a moment of reason and ultimately validates reason. But then behind scepticism a philosophical claim lies in waiting whose expression cannot be immediate or simple. Behind scepticism here the *system* lies in waiting, still shying away from publication, but already thoroughly permeating Hegel's thinking.

In the course of its history ancient scepticism collected a whole series of arguments, the so-called 'sceptical tropes', with the help of which the lack of absoluteness or the relativity of particular theses was demonstrated with great rigour. The ancient sceptics spoke of a 'diversity of men' such that things can only be certain for one person and must not for that reason be so for the others. The result is a relativism that recurs in the most varied forms, for instance as cultural or linguistic relativism. What might be clear from the standpoint of one cultural system may be far from that for others and to decide what actually is clear can at most mean bringing a third standpoint into play; the only thing certain about this is that it is distinct from the other two, but it does not for that reason possess any sort of final and normative authority. An alternative interpretation is to say that things are themselves antinomically constituted. One thinks of Kant's question as to the beginning and end of the universe in space and time and the conclusion of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that the answer to such questions can favour one side or the other without either gaining the upper hand. Hegel observes that none of these sceptical reflections constitutes a genuine objection to reason, although they certainly do that against the finite assumptions from which common images and opinions are constructed. It is reason itself that forces the critical reflection and which, in order to come to itself, can only do that if it has already abandoned the simple making of assumptions and positive claims. Thinking is negating and philosophy begins at the point where negation is absolute. Scepticism, the doubt about what one claims to know, is thus a midwife of philosophy; but the scepticism must be sufficiently radical and may not leave privileged prejudices untouched. Hegel's further philosophical research will seek to reveal the finitude of the forms of thought and logical assumptions, for instance, about the world in which we live, and with the help of sceptical methods to render the concepts *fluid*. Even in the *Berlin Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel was still giving comparatively a lot of space to scepticism. The "relation of scepticism to philosophy", he says there, is "this, that scepticism is the dialectic of everything determinate. The finitude of every image or representation of the truth can be demonstrated, since it contains a negation and with that

a contradiction within it".<sup>18</sup> Everything that is is what it is in its *somethingness*, its determinateness, only in that it is at the same time not something else; there is no positive setting which is not negatively mediated, which is what it is by virtue of the fact that it is not something else. The positive meaning of the term 'subject', for instance, can only be understood from the opposition to the term 'object', i.e. whoever has not understood that being a subject immediately means not being an object has also not understood what being a subject really means; subjectivity is precisely self-positioning with respect to objectivity so it is also the exclusion of objectivity. In general, being determinate or determinate being is always immediately a matter of being limited; position is not possible without negation or, as Hegel often said with Spinoza in mind, *omnis determinatio est negatio*—all determination is negation.<sup>19</sup>

Hegel regards scepticism as essentially the concentration on this negative side of the constitution of determination and as such a vital integrating component of philosophy, not its enemy, which, of course, does not let *dogmatic* scepticism off the hook. Its error is to take everything positive exclusively as immediately negative. The fact that we have to think of a determinate term—a determinate determination—always as both positive and negative does not mean that it does not make sense to think in determinate terms at all. The fact that one can only ever explain a determinate thought in determinate form and language, thus only in finite terms, does not imply that this explication must be meaningless or untrue. What it does imply is that the explication of ideas can only proceed in reference to other explications, to which the first sets itself in specific determinate relations and this is the systematic, the dialectical basic procedure of philosophy. While scepticism sees in the differences among ideas, concepts or images only an objection to their truth, philosophy finds a productive principle precisely in such difference; it finds here the point at which these thoughts or concepts can enter into relations with one another, so that from the negation and from working off their immediate negativity with each other the greater whole can emerge. It is fundamental to Hegel's philosophy to see in the differences, or in difference as such, a synthetic principle, a mediation. For dogmatic scepticism difference or its formulation is the conclusion; dialectical philosophy finds in difference the potential for relation and when this potential is grasped as immediate or as totality, it turns into

18 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, TW 19, p. 359; cf. Haldane and Simson vol. 11, p. 330; Scepticism, vol. 11, 2.D.¶ 2.

19 Cf. Spinoza, *Epistula L*, in *Opera* ed. C. Gebhardt, v. 4, p. 240 and Hegel, GW XXI, 101; Miller p. 113.

the affirmative. Dogmatic or one-sided scepticism merely finds and fixes the difference, thereby making it positive. Speculative philosophy, as Hegel sees it, finds in difference the drive to self-overcoming into totality. To anticipate here briefly formulations, ideas and associations that we will be more closely concerned with in the *Science of Logic*, one could provisionally say that difference as constitutive of everything that is in determinate determination is as such *relation*. This means, however, that difference, as relation, is always inherently also different from itself, i.e. that it comprises both difference and non-difference; in this sense it refers itself to a totality, a whole, that is not simply 'positively different'. Difference is not an identical concept; it is a dialectical concept that designates a generative, productive principle in the formation of concepts and ideas.

Does Hegel's philosophy have a principle? This is not such an easy question to answer, because in this case one may not think in terms of a precedence of principle over what depends on it, of the universal over its derivative, as we have seen it in the case of Fichte. If Hegel's philosophy has a principle governing all its moments then it is this conception of difference as potential unity, as mediation of totality, of the context of reason. It still sounds highly abstract here, but in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel will show how it works concretely in relation to the manifestations of reason in space and time and in the *Science of Logic* he will do it in relation to the categorial forms of reason itself. At this point we have to be content with a first designation of the principle of speculative philosophy and return to Hegel's published writings in the Jena period.

## 7 Krug's Quill

The contributions to the *Critical Journal* were intended to profile the genuinely speculative standpoint as such in contrast to non-speculative philosophy. The critique of Aenesidemus-Schulze graphically illustrated this introductory and polemical intention in clearly delineating the difference with the thinking of the understanding. Here we will briefly discuss a review with very similar orientation, *Wie der gemeine Menschenverstand die Philosophie nehme,—dargestellt an den Werken des Herrn Krug's*—How common sense views philosophy—as represented in the works of Herr Krug. It appeared in the *Journal* in January 1802 two months before the *Scepticism* essay.<sup>20</sup> Hegel's contemporary Wilhelm Traugott Krug (1770–1842) was the same age as him and entered into the

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20 Hegel, GW IV, 174–187; TW 2, 188–207.

history of philosophy, or at least into the footnotes thereto, first because in 1805 he became Kant's successor in Königsberg and then also through the publication of an *Allgemeines Handwörterbuch der philosophischen Wissenschaften*—General dictionary of the philosophical sciences, in six volumes (1827–29), which was actually reprinted in the twentieth century, but finally because he got caught up in a controversy with the representatives of German idealism, the lasting result of which was the image of “Krug's quill” as a symbol for a distorted kind of thinking quite alien to philosophy. So what is the point of this quill? Krug is of the opinion that idealism (he means Fichte and Schelling) has failed to fulfill its promise to deduce “the whole system of our thoughts”. Krug says he would be satisfied if someone would show him how “*just a little something*”, for instance the “*moon with all its features*” or even “his writing quill” could be deduced (GW IV, 178).

The controversy is of interest because it refers to a misunderstanding that is still occasionally encountered and to which Fichte and Schelling (but certainly not Hegel) themselves perhaps provided sustenance. The misunderstanding consists in the view that speculative philosophy claims to have found something like a universal formula for the world; this supposedly gave it a total overview from which everything in the world could be constructed or derived all the way down to the goose quill that somebody is holding in their hand, as if everything finite should emerge in a linear series through analysis of an infinity laid claim to by this world formula. In fact, however, philosophy seeks and finds what is necessary; in that it also finds the necessity for the emergence of the contingent or empirical in the step from infinity to finitude, from pure self-relation to immediate relation-to-other. Hegel, still eminently the subjective idealist, argues in his essay against Krug that the “activity of intelligence” must also be taken into account “in which the boundary between I and thing appears to be contingent and without ground” (GW IV, 191). Idealist philosophy does not deny that there are perspectives on things and situations in which they represent themselves in purely empirical determination and it does not claim that every problem in the sciences or in everyday life can be turned into a problem that philosophy can solve. Hegel went beyond this and regarded it as a fundamental structural moment of nature as nature, that it does not contain any “purely rational” system and thus also no logical continua that could facilitate a “derivation” of individual natural phenomena. In nature otherness predominates immediately over unity, so it is not to be pressed into a system of identity. It is precisely in this way that spirited mind in its immediacy can “naturally” stand in relation to other minds, even entering into a relation which essentially also contains contingency. Most people with whom we come into contact encounter us initially for reasons in which there is no spiritual,

ethical or intellectual necessity; they could just as easily not encounter us, or just as easily other people could take their, or indeed our places. Necessary, not just external, relations, i.e. those uniting outside and inside in one, in contrast, begin at the point where one's own identity is involved—in relation to the true teacher and friend or in the kind of community that constitutes ethical life. In analogy to this various perspectives on inherently speculative contexts are possible, contexts such as life, ethics or also the pursuit of knowledge. In such contexts it is far from being the case that the real concept of reason gives the answer to all problems. The biochemist, the doctor and the poet all deal with life, even if they do not have to consider right from the start, as the philosopher does, that they have to do with something going beyond the objective that does not follow any kind of really finite logic. For them external and empirical aspects and moments of a whole that can be placed in empirical contexts suffice. What idealist philosophy does deny is that one can know exactly what *empirical* and what *a posteriori* mean without knowing in advance the non-empirical sense of knowledge and the necessity of the concept. The starting point of all philosophy is not what is contingent, but what is necessary, not the fragmented part, but the anticipation of the whole, not what lacks context, but the logos. If one takes the reverse course, then the necessary itself can only appear to be merely contingent, the whole itself must seem to consist of fragments. In other words that which cannot be known cannot itself be the standard for what can be known and for knowing itself, rather the converse—*veritas norma sui et falsi*, as Spinoza said, truth is the norm for itself and its opposite or its privation, not the converse.<sup>21</sup>

In the Krug review Hegel says that it is impermissible to treat the absolute as if it were “of the same rank” as the contingent; indeed pure mediation, from which all idealism starts, cannot be regarded as a finite mediation or a simple matter of fact. In Hegel we will encounter the application of this principle again and again—for instance in his logic of contingency within the *Science of Logic*, but also in his philosophy of nature, which expressly forbids anything that could in any way be described as a ‘deduction’ of the diversity of animal and plant species, recognising that the concept of nature must represent the concept in the medium of the contingent, of the material, of the broken logical context. In this sense Herr Krug’s writing quill together with the goose from which it was taken will for ever remain ‘underived’—not to the detriment of its utility, but in the sense of a free association with the irreducibly contingent, which in this way can that much more impartially be taken into the service of freedom or of necessity.

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21 Spinoza, *Ethik* II, Prop. 43 scholium.

8 *Faith and Knowledge*

The essay *Glauben und Wissen, oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie*—Faith and Knowledge, or the reflection philosophy of subjectivity in the totality of its forms as Kantian, Jacobian and Fichtean philosophy, appeared in the *Critical Journal* in the summer of 1802.<sup>22</sup> Here Hegel turns from common sense's misunderstandings of speculative philosophy to demarcating the borders between the latter and its own predecessors as well as with its original initiators. The word 'faith' in the title refers immediately to the second of the three philosophers dealt with in the essay, the Kant critic Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), although the association with the first of them, Kant himself, is also strong. The full title makes clear that Hegel regards all three as representatives of a philosophy of reflection, a subjective philosophical standpoint blocking out totality that gradually reaches a certain conclusion in them. We have already gotten to know Kant and Fichte as Hegel's philosophical conversation partners in the early writings and in the *Difference* essay. Jacobi, who was a personal friend of the Kant critics Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), tried to establish a kind of new realism against Kant, not founded on rational knowledge, but on 'immediate certainty', i.e. faith. The thing in itself and appearance are thus for Jacobi not, as for Kant, in principle distinct; in immediate certainty they are one and the same. Jacobi argued that the rationalist committed to the understanding must end up, if he is consistent, in Spinozism, i.e. in the dissolution of concrete objects in the all-in-oneness of absolute substance or God. He no longer sees autonomous things in their concrete determination, but only within an abstract all-in-oneness, in a universal that no longer concludes with or finds closure in the reality of the particular. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel sees all three—Kant, Jacobi and Fichte—trapped in finite thinking, and while they do seek to achieve completion by reaching out to faith in order to go beyond the rationally knowable and in this way to escape the reflection eternally bound to finitude, in the opposition of consciousness, of subject and object, they end up effectively confirming that bondage. The genuinely supersensible, the absolute or totality is not philosophically encompassed by any of the three, but instead in Kant only *postulated*, in Fichte only an *ought*, and in Jacobi only *believed*. In the fact that for all three the absolute is only subjective Hegel recognises the "principle of Protestantism" or a "subjectivity, in which beauty and truth find expression in feelings and sentiments, in love and understanding"

22 Hegel, GW IV, 313–414; TW 2, 287–433. English translation by Cerf and Harris 1977, see p. 11, fn. 11 above.

(GW IV, 316). The objective is lost to this principle, it is purely finite and in fact a limitation on what is absolute and eternal; for Hegel there is nothing for this principle in the objective but “the danger of the understanding, which finds in what is observed only a thing, reducing the sacred grove to mere timber” (GW IV, 317). Thinking now splits into a factual recognition of the finitude of the objective and external, an enlightened understanding that gains normative status on the one side and a subjective longing, a drive for happiness, i.e. for satisfaction within finite objectivity, on the other. Enlightenment, thinking committed to the understanding, and eudaemonism, striving after happiness, are the strains inherently tied together in the Protestant principle that comes to fruition in the philosophy of reflection. Put in other terms, what we have here is a naturalism on the one side and a complementary abstract idealism on the other, banal externality here, pretentious interiority there, and all set up without disturbing the opposition, the separation. One can even see here how Hegel has effectively laid bare the derivation of romanticism from the Enlightenment. Romanticism is after all nothing more than the elevation of that “culture of reflection to a system” (GW IV, 322). On the one hand, totally in line with the Enlightenment, romanticism fixes the finitude of empirical things, while on the other declaring the eternal dissatisfaction of subjectivity with that finitude, thus postulating an eudaemonism, a happiness, that only happens somewhere beyond the already cemented objectivity, only to be found far out there where the blue flower blooms as the symbol of a happy mediation with the world. Hegel sees Kant as implementing the “objective side” of this principle in that he erected in his practical philosophy a second, purely intelligible world as the “highest objectivity within finitude” over the banal finitude of the natural world. Jacobi in Hegel’s view brought out “the subjective side” in that he “situated the opposition and the identity, which is postulated as absolute, in the subjectivity of feeling as an eternal longing and an incurable pain”. Finally Fichte constitutes “the synthesis of the two” in that like Kant he sees objectivity as the actual realisation of the world of freedom, but still regards this realisation as a conflict between objectivity and subjectivity and as “a longing and a subjective identity” (GW IV, 321). Hegel believes that philosophies of this kind in which reflection struggles with its own absoluteness but always remains a “reason affected by sensibility” (GW IV, 323) cannot do otherwise than put finitude in place of the absolute and seek to know man instead of knowing God. They are philosophies of “egoism”, which, if they were taken beyond their finitude would complain over the loss of finitude, of the “privation” of totality on which they have staked everything. Hegel offers a comparison from the creative arts.

As if art, limited to portraiture, found its ideal aspect in depicting a longing in the eye of an ordinary face and a melancholy smile on its mouth, while being strictly forbidden from representing the gods in their exaltation above longing and sorrow because the presentation of eternal images would only be possible at the expense of humanity. Philosophy is not supposed to present the idea of man, but the abstract concept of an empirical mankind all tangled up in limitations, and to stay immovably impaled on the stake of the absolute opposition; and when it is completely clear about its restriction to the sensuous . . . philosophy is then supposed to prettify itself with the surface colour of the extrasensuous by pointing, in faith, to something higher. Truth, however, cannot be deceived by this sort of hallowing of a persistent finitude, for the true hallowing would have to destroy the finite" (ibid.).

The then current philosophy, the subjectivism of reflection, takes up an eccentric position to the absolute, to totality, to the philosophical idea; it solidifies a chasm between reason and factuality, a chasm reason has to hold fast to as a positive difference, not a mediation.

In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel treats Kant very harshly claiming that by making "the unity of reflection" into "the highest principle" (GW IV, 325) his philosophy is founded upon the impossibility of mediating subjectivity only to make this the point on which everything else depends. Clearly the *idea*, the totality or the reconciliation of subjective and objective, is there in Kant's concept of synthesis *a priori*; but the synthesis only appears in subjective form, namely as the judgment or proposition to which the appearance corresponds, not as the syllogism in which subjective and objective come together. "The copula" in Kant's proposition is in that sense only a setting, a positing, "not something thought or known; rather it expresses precisely the fact that the rational is not known" (GW IV, 329). The unity of reason is only available to the subject and it remains bound by the condition that subjectivity and objectivity are only subjectively mediated—a result of which Hegel says that it is as such certainly not false, so long as it comes with the addition that "this kind of knowing and discursive understanding" is "itself appearance", but definitely not if, as Kant claims, it can be taken "as in itself and absolute" (GW IV, 333).

Nevertheless Kant did go beyond the level of his deduction of the categories, in which Hegel believes he only fixed finite thinking very firmly. He went beyond it with his concept of a "transcendental power of imagination", that is with the notion of an "intuitive spontaneity" (GW IV, 341). Indeed, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant arrived at the idea of an "intuitive

understanding”, of an understanding that does not merely judge, which means producing an appearance, but actually “sees therein” totality, the unity of concept and appearance, one that actually anticipates totality. Unfortunately Kant still ends up opting “for appearance” (ibid.). As soon as it goes beyond objective judgment the effectiveness of the transcendental power of imagination only has the meaning of a “reflecting power of judgment”; this is where Kant’s real philosophical knowledge gets stuck in a formality that is not genuinely expanded by a power of imagination restricted to being purely subjective. Knowledge does not really take up what “is without consciousness”, what is already known, into itself, but remains something going its own way external to that. Knowing itself remains a beyond for Kantian reflection. Only in practical philosophy, in faith not in knowledge, does Kant vindicate “absolute reality” for reason (GW IV, 344), as independence from sensuous multiplicity and to that extent also as self-sufficiency. But then there are no effects of this back onto theoretical knowledge; faith transcending finitude belongs to reason, knowledge, on the other hand, or better reflection, remains bound to an objectivity which is dealt with not by reason, but only by the judging understanding.

Hegel sees Jacobi turning the Kantian subjectivity of the principle of reflection into “individuality” (GW IV, 347). Jacobi replaces the formalism of transcendental philosophy with “an inner life”, which “appears” to “become capable of the beauty of sentiment” (ibid.). Then surprisingly Jacobi deduces the things themselves from the certainties this individuality achieves in its interaction with finite things; so he overcomes formalism only by short-circuiting the argument and assigning the status of things in themselves to the appearances, which comes down to a regression into “an absolute dogmatism and elevation of the finite to an in-itself” (GW IV, 352). If this is so, then why does Hegel bother with Jacobi at all? Hegel expressly acknowledges the truth of the fundamental principle of the critical philosophy—“*that the understanding knows nothing in itself*” (GW IV, 351)—even after his critique of Kant and in opposition to Jacobi, so what sense does it make now to confront the critical philosophy with the uncritical philosophy opposed to it? What interests Hegel about Jacobi is firstly that he develops his thinking against the background of Spinoza’s philosophy, from which he believes he distances himself. The section on Jacobi in *Faith and Knowledge* is actually a concealed Spinoza section and in that sense of some significance for Hegel’s views on Spinoza in the Jena period. Spinoza tried to introduce the *infinitum actu*, the actual infinity into philosophy, he affirmed the totality, the concept of the unity of reason as objective and with that conceived of the unity of reason as the “absolute, self-identical, indivisible, true concept” (GW IV, 354). Spinoza’s infinity is not a positive concept; the possession of a positive concept of infinity has been declared to be

impossible for philosophy since Plato and Aristotle. Spinoza's infinity is in fact conceived of as the coming together of the most extreme opposites; it is the *absolute negation* of the opposites—those for instance of thought and being, universal and particular, infinite and finite—and only in this sense, as the null point of all conceptual determination, is it simultaneously “absolute affirmation”. If we recall our old example, the concept of life, then the infinity of life consists in the overcoming of the opposition between life itself on the one side and living things as autonomous individuals, as finite instances of life, on the other, into pure relatedness, i.e. in an immediate negation of both sides. Life is the unity as well as the multiplicity of living things and precisely in this, that it is both, lies its infinity, its pure process character. Thus the absolute overcomes the opposition of subject and object into itself—certainly not in the way that Jacobi thinks of this overcoming, namely as an empirical truth, an empirical certainty, which then can only be expressed as a subjective reflection. Instead with the presence of pure relation itself as “the eternal act or production of difference” Spinoza effectively did from the objective side what Fichte “familiarised our new subjective culture with” (GW IV, 358) from the subjective side. Once again the issue here is that the purely rational or the unity of reason must be the standard for the finitely rational or for subjective reason and not vice versa; one could also say that the *a priori of reason* must remain the presupposition for all conditioned reason. For Hegel's as for all great philosophy, reason is the ultimate fact behind which it is not possible to go, the great and pure sun-glade in whose light everything that shines before us in one way or another stands and to which everything which is in one way or another clear and bright points back. Jacobi is out to validate *a posteriori* factual reason against the *a priori* of reason and so he promotes the form of chronological succession in the pursuit of knowledge against Spinoza's conception of the eternity of absolute reason. The result of this is that all relations of reason are resolved into brilliant allusions, into a language that only plays with concepts to draw attention to the author while forgetting the matter itself. For Hegel Jacobi shares this language with Herder; Herder too “could . . . only bear reason as beautiful sentiment, instinct, individuality” (GW IV, 362), and the form of spiritual and intellectual education that Hegel struggles against in Jacobi's philosophy, a subjectivism that sets itself decisively against reason, is the formation of a “subjectivity imprisoned within in itself” (GW IV, 382) that ultimately has only the culinary relation to philosophy of the concept gourmet. At this point Hegel refers to Schleiermacher, who was committed to the same form of spirit of “Protestant subjectivity” (GW IV, 383). In contrast to Jacobi, however, Schleiermacher did find a kind of unity of reason in his concept of the “universe” in his *On Religion*, which has already been mentioned; but he saw

in the elevation to this unity of reason still only the performance of a religious disposition and “virtuosity” (GW IV, 385),<sup>23</sup> a subjectivity that can never forget itself, but which also cannot move over into action or to the objective form of thought, to the practices of religion or of art. This subjectivity in fact demands (and here Hegel is once again on the track of the logic of romanticism) “art without an artwork”, it practises the narcissism of “having something special for itself” thereby promoting “a universal atomism . . . of individual isolation” (GW IV, 386). Later in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel will analyze this phenomenon of atomism as the most fundamental tendency in modern civil society. One thing we can see in all this, even in our brief discussion of the main points, is that Hegel gives the analyses of contemporary philosophers a time-diagnostic twist, that in the developments of philosophy he sees not only the thought constructs of armchair conceptual acrobatics, but in each case also the meditations in which whole epochs are grasped and given a voice. When Hegel later says that philosophy is “its time grasped in thought”,<sup>24</sup> he means that the key to the different epochs is best sought in the philosophers. This, of course, is certainly not because the philosophers have thought more about themselves and their times than their contemporaries, nor because in the works of philosophy one comes closer to the so-called dominant realities in a given epoch; rather it is because the profile of any epoch is ultimately nothing if not a logical profile in which the genuinely formative epoch-making forces come together.

We have already gotten to know Hegel's general position on Fichte, so the final section of the essay which deals with Fichte will only be discussed briefly. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel discusses Fichte's philosophy as it appears not in his systematic work the *Theory of Science*, but in the popular essay *The Vocation of Man* of 1800. The principle of Fichte's philosophy, which as theory of science seeks to be the knowledge of knowledge as such, is the initially totally empty and undetermined knowledge that is supposed to reach determinate filling. This knowledge is empty in that it is only gained through a prior abstraction from all possible empirical contents of consciousness; this content of consciousness is now supposed to come back into knowledge, to be posited by knowledge. Hegel amusingly remarks that this is as if the money were to be deduced from out of the empty purse, “because in its lack, it is immediately

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23 Schleiermacher does indeed speak of a “virtuoso of holiness” cf. *Über die Religion. Reden an die gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, ed. by H.-J. Rothert, Hamburg 1958, p. 118. English translation by Richard Crouter in *Schleiermacher—On Religion, speeches to its cultured despisers*, Cambridge 1988.

24 Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, GW XIV/1, 15 (emphasised in original).

posited" (GW IV, 392). Fichte makes the demand on us to become aware of empty knowledge, of the form of awareness as such in order then from there to reach set, posited knowledge. Fichte's appeal essentially means making out of every object of consciousness a *conscious* object of consciousness; that I consciously acquire it by making it my own as a content of *my* consciousness (in a "second series" of contents of consciousness). Consciousness, or pure knowledge as "infinite possibility" of an "infinite actual reality" (GW IV, 398), stands opposed to a multiplicity of possible contents of it, from which we previously abstracted and to which now we are supposed to return. To that extent they remained the constant point of reference of consciousness throughout. Clearly, with our conscious setting of the contents of consciousness, Fichte demands practical realisation, the transition into practice. But a reason that always believes in the possibility of its realisation must also take up its content empirically if it wants to become practical, if it is not to get stuck in "empty declamation" of the autonomy of reason and the moral imperative (GW IV, 402). So Fichte too fixes the antithesis between infinite and finite; he does not arrive at an overcoming into an identity of reason given in itself, but only into an infinite practice that reflects no more than a *faith* in the possibility of tying the spheres of freedom and nature together.

What Hegel shows for the three philosophies of Kant, Jacobi and Fichte is that all of them ultimately lack the idea, the totality or the pure presence of the *a priori* of reason. Put in terms of Spinoza's significance for philosophy, they do not realise the *infinitum actu*, the actual infinity, but instead refer to infinite progresses or infinite differences, with which rather finitude is fixed and set up as the standard. The "dogmatism of being", Hegel says, "is recast into a dogmatism of thinking, the metaphysics of objectivity into a metaphysics of subjectivity" (GW IV, 412). The soul as a thing has turned into the transcendental I; the world as a thing in itself has become a system of appearances or affections of the subject; and the absolute, finally, has turned into a "realm beyond rational knowing" (*ibid.*). What is not recognised in all this is the negative or infinite significance of the absolute, of the point of unity or indifference of philosophy of not leaving any existing thing, least of all the finite, untouched.

Hegel concluded his essay *Faith and Knowledge* with a long sentence extending over three-quarters of a page, as opaque as it is famous, which cryptically announces his own alternative programme to the philosophy of subjectivity. Here, somewhat abbreviated, is the notorious sentence.

The pure concept, however, or infinity, as the abyss of nothing into which all being falls, must designate the infinite pain formerly only culturally given in historical terms as the sentiment on which the religion of the

new times is based, namely the feeling that God himself is dead . . . , it [i.e. the pure concept] must designate this infinite pain purely as a moment, but no more than a moment, of the highest idea and thereby give a philosophical existence to something that was either a moral prescription of an empirical being or the concept of formal abstraction; in this way it gives philosophy the idea of absolute freedom and with that the absolute suffering, the speculative good Friday, which was the historical event, restoring it as such in the whole truth and harshness of its ungodliness; since the joviality, the unprovable and that which is more individual in the dogmatic philosophies as well as in the natural religions must vanish, it is from that harshness that the highest totality in its whole seriousness can and must return to life as out of its deepest ground and then it will be all encompassing in the most jovial freedom of its form. (GW IV, 413 f.)

Put simply, philosophy must face the fact that no immediate being, neither a finite one nor a being posited as positive and infinite like God, is immediately given, but rather that all these kinds of being are essentially negated in the sense that they are taken back into the absolute interrelatedness of the philosophical idea. There is nothing immediate that can offer a real support for philosophy; for Hegel the whole notion of such a thing constitutes the other side of absolute freedom, which for finite beings can only consist in the form of a grief just as absolute, the pain of completely tearing itself away from all familiar images, presuppositions and fixed opinions. Hegel sees philosophy beginning there where nothing is unquestionable. At the same time this negativity, this complete alienation, which, as we said, belongs to the essence of freedom, is only a moment of the idea, which should present itself through this moment and beyond it as the “highest totality”, as the pure motion of the concept or as the existing absolute. Even in Plato the departure from the cave is associated not only with the pains of removal from the familiar condition and of rising above them, but also with the painful blinding by the light of the sun; indeed, when he is finally free, the captive is so blinded that initially he sees nothing. Nevertheless light is the principle of all visibility and of all determination. Hegel’s image of a speculative good Friday is less that of a subjective procedure as in Plato and much more one of an *absolute* event, the vanishing of immediate being as such, which Hegel understands as the epochal occurrence which has not been fully thought through to the end in the philosophies of subjectivism. Nietzsche and Heidegger diagnosed this vanishing of immediate being as the emergence of nihilism, a concept that was introduced into philosophy by Jacobi.<sup>25</sup>

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25 Jacobi, *Über das Unternehmen des Kritizismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen und der Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Absicht zu geben*—On the enterprise of the

Viewed from Hegel's position neither were able to respond to nihilism in any other than more or less romantic terms, Nietzsche by emphasising the singular individual as what is genuinely significant, even infinitely significant, and Heidegger by means of a kind of new faith in being which, despite all assurances to the contrary, only subjectively overcomes the positive difference, the actually persisting "withdrawal of being". Both then, even if reluctantly, affirmed the articulation of being as of something finite, i.e. of finite things. For Hegel, in contrast, the vanishing of being is not to be understood as nihilism and all attempts to hold fast to something as a bulwark against this vanishing like subjectivity, finite being or whatever are futile. Hegel will show in the *Science of Logic* that the vanishing of being, which happens not only at the beginning of the work, is the birth of the idea; it is what releases the self of all things and connections. There is no finite concept of the idea or of the self; they are only to be found in the motion of all concepts. They are the logical life of the world and in that sense certainly not to be feared.

## 9 *Natural Law Essay*

We conclude our promenade through the critical writings of the Jena period with Hegel's *Natural law* essay, which appeared in two parts at the end of 1802 and at the beginning of 1803 in the *Critical Journal*.<sup>26</sup> The precise title is *Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, seine Stelle in der praktischen Philosophie und sein Verhältnis zu den positiven Rechtswissenschaften*—On the scientific treatment of natural law, its position in practical philosophy and its relation to positive jurisprudence. Hegel lectured on natural law in Jena in the summer semesters of 1802 and 1803 as well as in the winter semester 1803/4 and again in summer 1805, the essay thus stands in close relation to his academic teaching. It must also be seen in relation to Hegel's study on *The German constitution*, discussed above, which was written in 1801/2 but not published. The conclusion on the German situation given in that text, namely that the German empire was then merely an empirical structure, while its constitution no longer admitted of a scientific concept so that Germany was no longer a state, refers directly to the fundamental problem of natural law. The

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critical philosophy to make reason understand and to give philosophy in general a new purpose, in Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. Fr. Roth and Fr. Köppen, vol. 3, Leipzig 1816 (reprint Darmstadt 1968), p. 175 and *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> GW IV, 415–485; TW 2, 434–530. Cf. English translation by T.M. Knox in G.W.F. Hegel: *Natural Law, The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, Its Place in Moral Philosophy, and Its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Law*, Pennsylvania 1975.

very suggestion that dead juridical or constitutional forms should be set aside and replaced by viable living forms expresses a theme of natural law in the widest sense; the idea is that the positive-legal forms should not be completely external to the life of a people but should form a constitutional unity with it. There should be a continuity between the two sides, the possibility of mutual participation. If the law and its institutions constantly appear to those subject to them as unjust, this can hardly ensure the system of positive law a secure existence. Independent of these contemporary references, above all the “Doctrine of Right” in Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), had made natural law a major topic of discussion in philosophy, although Fichte’s *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*—Foundation of natural law according to the principles of the theory of science (1796) preceded it, as did the short text by the 21-year-old Schelling, *Neue Deduktion des Naturrechts*—New deduction of natural law, which also appeared in 1796.<sup>27</sup> The tension reflected in all these proposals is that between subjective morality on the one hand and external legality on the other, between abstract interiority and equally abstract external force. Hegel regarded this tension as representing one and the same principle of reflection in two different directions and he proposes an original way to overcome it in his *Natural law* essay with his own new concept of *Sittlichkeit*—ethical life. *Sittlichkeit* is not simply an expansion of the perspectives on the problem he was developing in his own philosophy of spirit, it remains rather all the way up into the *Philosophy of Right* a whole new dimension of the problem original to Hegel. *Sittlichkeit* for Hegel includes the existence of freedom that reaches into pre-reflexive regions enabling participation in law as a space within objective spirit.

To the details. Rosenkranz says that in this essay Hegel “sought initially to bring out his own system more precisely”,<sup>28</sup> and he begins it with several suggestions for embedding the investigation within the philosophical sciences as such. All science of law, including that of natural law, is the science of how freedom gives itself form; more precisely, the problem is the relationship of the concept to empirical reality, of absolute negativity to intuitive images. The two one-sided approaches that can hinder grasping the concept of law are formalism and empiricism, the former an abstract legal rationalism and the latter an

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27 The term *Naturrecht* (natural law) as it was used in Germany after Kant generally referred to the aspects of legal theory accessible to philosophy; the term thus does not necessarily refer to a philosophy of right arguing from nature, the nature of man, a natural order or particular metaphysical presuppositions. After Kant natural law becomes rational law founded on a semantic autonomy of the idea of right.

28 Rosenkranz *ibid.*, 172.

equally abstract history of law. Philosophical science, in contrast, should begin with the unity of the idea, i.e. with the insight that law is a mode of appearance of freedom, which means that conversely in the provisions of law the world of appearance can be seen as a world of freedom. Hegel speaks of *ethical life* as the “mover of all human things” and continuing in this vein he claims that one can read the “condition of the world” from the “condition of natural law” as the actual coming together of the idea of freedom with empirical reality (GW IV, 419). The purely empirical concept of law, i.e. that of the positivity of law and of the definition of law in terms of the option of force in Kant, proceeds from the view of men as initially independent subject-atoms existing side by side who are compelled to form a society and only then do they enter into the state of law. Thomas Hobbes is the philosopher Hegel has in mind here, whose original state of nature has individuals fighting each other on all sides, individuals who only establish legal relationships among themselves after entering into a social contract erecting a sovereign power to which they all without exception submit. In this model an original somehow “authentic” subjectivity and a system of its alienation, the system of law, stand opposed to each other. But Hegel poses the question as to whether law understood as freedom realising itself through its own form does remain external to the individuals and really must appear as a “single and particular majesty” (GW IV, 427). “The absolute idea of ethical life,” however, contains more; it has “the state of nature and majesty as simply identical, since the latter is nothing but absolute ethical nature; and in the realisation of majesty there can be no thought of any loss of absolute freedom, which is what would have to be understood by ‘natural freedom’, or of any sacrifice of ethical nature.” (ibid.). Natural law includes the principle that the individual not be alienated in the legal relations, that within them he experience not a distorted world based on arbitrary diktat, but an original connection with the genuine motivations of his ethical life, with his practical self. Empirically speaking the German empire in the year 1802 was certainly still a state and its existing statutes of positive law could, at least to a certain degree, still be implemented with police power. Against that we have Hegel’s statement “Germany is no longer a state” from the *Constitution* essay as an objection from the standpoint of natural law against something that remains empirically existing, but which offers the freedom that requires concrete forms no real possibility of identification because it no longer allows the individual any genuine participation.

Opposed to empiricism stands Kant and Fichte’s principle of purely formal freedom, of freedom understood negatively. This freedom is an infinite *a priori*, but it does not organically move into qualified formation by its own efforts. The two see no “existing freedom” but only empirical arrangements, which in the

best case are supposed to offer the greatest possible empirical possibilities of choice while excluding a transformation of freedom into institutional forms, into forms of life or, as Hegel says, into the ethical life of a whole people. Kant and Fichte's negative understanding of freedom immediately implies a mechanistic view of the state, which in principle means a police state. The state is the surveillance system of individuals' external behaviour combined with an antitrust division for conflict resolution. With that, however, in another new move for Hegel, he realises that this view of the state expresses its status for bourgeois society, for the "system of so-called political economy", the "system of the universal mutual dependence in relation to physical needs" (GW IV, 450). This "system" is in fact a subsystem spreading out within and undermining the totality of the state and ethical life, in which the life of the whole is constantly threatened with suffocation. In fact the state must include within itself both systems, that of the needs—as it were, the inorganic side—and that of freedom—i.e. that of its organising self. This is why Hegel believes, referring especially to Plato, that a separation of orders according to functional principles is unavoidable; while the "bourgeois" or the "private citizen", as Hegel says (GW IV, 458), administer to the system of needs, there should be a general order of really political people who should represent and realise the organic whole or freedom as the concrete goal of the state. The point of political life is not to satisfy the pressing needs of finitude; on the contrary, where the demands of the satisfaction of needs hinders real free life and its observation of itself in the works of free *Sittlichkeit*, the *necessity* for this satisfaction introduces into the life of the states an unreconciled, if not tragic, element. The point of political life is far more to give the idea of freedom form and appearance in order to make it observable, i.e. to allow the individuals to find within external existence manifestations of a free *plastic* existence open to the absolute goals, to live a life of freedom in the resonance space of the whole and not only in their private lives.

Many of the thoughts Hegel first reveals in the *Natural law* essay recur not only in the *System der Sittlichkeit*, written soon after, but as we have said, many years later in his *Philosophy of Right* as well. Two examples are his concept of overcoming abstract morality with a still unconscious but life-forming *Sittlichkeit* and his principle of the priority of the state over society. We will return to these issues and discuss them in greater detail in their respective places. Now we must take a closer look at a Hegel who, independent of the questions of the day and not yet under the eyes of the reading public, is on his way to the system, to the development of that philosophical total proposal that clearly bears his own distinctive handwriting.

## Jena Esoteric

In a letter of 29 September 1804 to Goethe in Weimar, the minister of education and culture who always took his responsibility for the university of Jena very seriously, the lecturer Hegel informs him that he is preparing a “purely scientific elaboration of philosophy” for the winter semester which he expects to publish soon. The “previous literary works” from his pen he calls “too negligible”, so that he would not “venture . . . to present [them] before the eyes” of the great poet; but this will not be the case with the new work.<sup>1</sup> In fact these “negligible” works include *Faith and Knowledge* and the *Natural law* essay, which are hardly of minor significance, but Hegel does set them apart from his real philosophical work. This is why we considered Hegel’s exoteric, published writings in Jena above separate from his unpublished, acroamatic or esoteric writings produced in association with his lectures. We described the most important writings of the first group as Hegel developing his own position in contradistinction to other contemporary positions, especially, of course, Kant, Jacobi and Fichte, all of whom he judges to be fixated on the finite. All three are, despite their speculative initiatives, ultimately representatives of “reflection philosophy”, of a thinking tied to consciousness and its objects. In all this we have also seen how Hegel has himself been working on the methodological foundations of speculative philosophy. In this regard understanding difference as relation along with the resulting methodological concept of *determinate negation*, taking over Spinoza’s actual infinite, and in general developing philosophy out of totality, these are all solid achievements in his work. What we have not yet seen is Hegel bringing his own thinking into comprehensive, well-rounded, systematic form. This, the “purely scientific elaboration of philosophy”, is precisely what Hegel was doing in the lecture courses he gave in Jena, from which we have three separate system drafts in varying degrees of development.

Hegel taught in Jena from the winter semester 1801/2 to the winter semester of 1804/5 as lecturer and then from the summer semester 1805 to the start of 1807 as ‘extraordinary professor’. For the promotion to professor and then from 1806 for a modest annual emolument of 100 taler, Hegel had essentially Goethe to thank who supported him from Weimar. In his first semester in 1801/2 Hegel began with a course on “Logic and Metaphysics”, of which only fragmentary

1 Hegel, *Briefe* v. I, no. 49, p. 85. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 685.

student notes remain. A “*disputatorium philosophicum*” together with Schelling was also given. In the following semesters “logic and metaphysics” was repeated several times, but he also taught natural law; from 1803 he also taught natural philosophy and philosophy of spirit; in the winter of 1805/6 Hegel lectured for the first time on “history of philosophy”. The announcement of the lecture programme for the summer of 1807 included the title “*Phaenomenologia mentis ex libro suo*—Phenomenology of mind from his book: *System of the Sciences*, first part” for the second time. It first appeared in the announcement for the previous semester, which was cancelled because of the war with Napoleon. It shows that Hegel did plan to teach the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but was unable to do so because in the meantime he had left the university and moved to Bamberg. It is also of interest that three times in Jena Hegel announced classes on “pure mathematics” and twice they actually took place using contemporary textbooks—throughout his life Hegel never abandoned his interest in the further development of mathematics, to which the second edition of the *Logic of Being in the Science of Logic*, the last text Hegel worked on before his untimely death in 1831, bears testimony. In 1803 Schelling had abandoned Jena in favour of Würzburg. Hegel himself tried to get a job elsewhere and wrote in May 1805 to Johann Heinrich Voß (1751–1826), the translator of Homer, who had recently left Jena for the University of Heidelberg. In the letter we hear again of the “system of philosophy”. Hegel says he has “remained silent before the public for three years and lectured on the entire science of philosophy—speculative philosophy, philosophy of nature, philosophy of spirit, natural law”. In Heidelberg he could, as he writes, also lecture on aesthetics but in all this his efforts would be directed to “teach philosophy to speak German”. He goes on to say that “for Germany, the time seems to have arrived for the truth to become manifest. In Heidelberg, a new dawn for the weal of the sciences could arise”. Hegel’s hope is that “a more effective activity of art and science” should be able to “take hold of general culture”, the “constellation of the age” seems to him to be favourable to a new “publicity for the sciences” and to overcoming “shallow thoughtlessness . . . arbitrariness and arrogance”.<sup>2</sup> The move to Heidelberg came to nothing in this first attempt, but his letter to Voß is symptomatic of Hegel’s confidence at this time of the possibility of reform. In that spirit the esoteric drafts for the lectures should not be separated from the commitment to founding philosophy anew as a science. We turn now to the three system sketches that have been preserved from Hegel’s Jena period.

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2 Hegel, *Briefe* v. I, No. 55, pp. 99 ff. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler pp. 106–8.

## 1 System Draft I 1803/4

There is no doubt that Hegel's Jena system drafts surpass anything we have yet encountered as testimonies to his thinking. Containing the principles setting the course for Hegel's further path in philosophy, these documents are undoubtedly crucial to understanding the philosopher's development, but unfortunately they are extremely dense and difficult. Nevertheless, it has to be conceded that especially the second system draft of 1804/5 is among the most ambitious legacies that have ever been left to posterity by a philosopher. Hegel is still struggling with language to express himself and realise his fundamental intuition. That 'Hegel German' we know especially from the main published works of the mature period certainly did not simply fall from the sky; it is the product of intensive work on philosophical language as such and the contribution it made to the formation of a following shows that Hegel was not completely unsuccessful in this effort.

We now have authoritative editions of the Jena system drafts in volumes VI to VIII of the *Gesammelte Werke* edition with each volume containing one distinct, not to say complete, system draft. The texts were first published by Hans Ehrenberg and Herbert Link in 1915 as the *First System*; subsequently they were available in Georg Lasson's editions of the *Jena Logic, Metaphysics and Philosophy of Nature* published in 1923 as well as that of the *Jena Real Philosophy* by Johannes Hoffmeister in 1931, where *Realphilosophie* as the counterpart to logic comprises philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit. The dating of the texts was not easy since direct references are lacking. According to the new critical edition, which primarily relies on the methods of word usage statistics, the following ordering seems to be the most likely.<sup>3</sup> The first system draft, including manuscripts on the philosophies of nature and of spirit, would be assigned to the winter semester 1803/4; the second, most complete and most important of the drafts, which is preserved in a clean copy and was very likely intended for publication, was written between the summer of 1804 and the beginning of 1805; the third draft finally, which again treats of the philosophies of nature and of spirit, is assigned to the years 1805 and 1806 and thus comes very close to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which was finished in 1806, apart from the preface, and published in 1807.

These three drafts, as the first publishers Ehrenberg and Link indicated in the title they chose, constitute what are no longer merely system programmes or system fragments, but Hegel's first real system, at least *in statu nascendi*. It is

3 Cf. H. Kimmerle, *Die Chronologie der Manuskripte Hegels in den Bänden [der GW] 4 bis 9—Chronology of Hegel's manuscripts in GW volumes 4 to 9*, in GW VIII, 348–361.

not about provisional arrangements or experiments any more; it is now quite clear that these writings can only be understood in orientation to the later published system. We will not be concerned here with this first system *in extenso*; the important questions will be dealt with in relation to the final version of the system in the published texts starting with the *Science of Logic*. Anyone seriously interested in Hegel would do well to work through the Jena system drafts, especially the second draft of 1804/5, which is strongly recommended, not only in order to see how Hegel's philosophy developed in its formative years and because of their significance for the history of philosophy, but more because of the substance of their content. What follows should provide an initial orientation to these texts, which will hopefully stimulate further detailed study.

As we said the first draft deals with topics in the philosophies of nature and of spirit in a total of 22 shorter and longer fragments. Its treatment of certain important themes and theses in the philosophy of spirit is particularly interesting. Hegel opens the philosophy of spirit with the concept of consciousness, treating it not like Reinhold as the basic Archimedean point of philosophy and not like Fichte immediately as the self-referential, active, original unity and structure of knowledge, but as concrete, existing mind and spirit. Briefly put, consciousness is not simply a form or an immediate principle of form in philosophy, it is actually existing spirit, it is the individual presence of the universal, or, in Hegel's words, it is "the immediate individual taken up into the positive universal" (GW VI, 269), "at once absolute individuality and absolute universality" (GW VI, 295 fn.), the real mediation of naturally dispersed externality and ideally integrated interiority. For Hegel the mind never stands simply opposed to nature; it constitutes nature overcome to a moment; in spirited mind the alogical in nature is something known, something logically fully relational. Thus, in this form of spirit consciousness is nature fully idealised, which does not mean immediately objectivated. Hegel does not see formal thinking on this side and an external something that has to be captured by thought over on the other side. Instead consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) present as a given state is inherently already nature eliminated; it is the space of freedom that man opens up for himself with his conscious-being (*Bewußt-Sein*) and as such in principle, logically ranked higher; it is a more solid, more firm existence than that of nature, than all of nature. In knowledge, in knowing, man spends time in a space of universality in this form not available in nature, although neither is it simply "beside" nature. It is only available as actively negated nature; "*in spirit nature exists as that which is its essence*" (GW VI, 266). It is easy to see that this positioning of consciousness responds directly to the most general premises of the subjective possibility of knowing nature, for here the knowing consciousness is not oriented to something totally alien and heterogeneous to

it, to a foreign substance. For Descartes thinking has to catch up with extension and can only do that with God's help; knowledge of nature in the Cartesian system is a kind of *anamnesis* of the moments already overcome into its own being, catching up with something only initially existing in itself, overcoming externalised knowing into the oneness of the concept. The power of nature confronting individual or empirical consciousness certainly does consist in the fact that it represents itself as an immediately externalised totality of knowing against consciousness, as an "empirical infinity" of which there is no *immediately* rational concept. But then the power of consciousness against this "bad" infinity of nature lies precisely in the fact that consciousness as a form of spirited mind submerges everything physically existing within the form of intelligibility and does not let anything external get away with being an abstract other, for it, consciousness is always capable of converting it into conscious being. Consciousness is the power that negates the positive, it "translates" everything that merely is into the "ideality of universality", into self-conscious knowing.

Hegel's basic thinking becomes more accessible when, still in the System draft 1, he cites language as the first potency of consciousness, as its immediate qualitative or determinate being (*Dasein*). None of the other idealist philosophers did this, no-one beside Hegel taught that the *condicio humana* essentially consists above all in the use of language; they were all convinced of the priority of logic or of pure reason over language. While none of them held the view that language was simply an empirical factor, certainly none of them held, as Hegel did, that reason and spirit come into their own only and immediately in, indeed, that they are actually present in, language. One can even say that here too Hegel turns the usual relations on their head. The idealists agree with general opinion in assuming that consciousness uses language to express its images and thoughts; Hegel taught that conscious-being (*Bewußt-Sein*) does not make use of language, but that it *actually is* language. Language is itself mindful spirit, which itself is, understood in Hegel's sense, never merely something internal, never an abstraction hovering above concrete things, but always a qualitative being, a midpoint and mediation that is simultaneously *for itself* or reflected into itself. Hegel says that consciousness is a linguistically "bound existence" and has "its being as language" (GW VI, 277). Language then is the first exemplification of the Hegelian principle that spirit is nature overcome and posited or set within knowing. Language is not without its physical moments, as sound or text it is also an object out there in nature; but this externality is simultaneously obliterated and transposed into an inner intelligibility. Language unfolds its meanings by immediately taking back the materiality it asserts, developing knowledge in this double motion through that materiality and back out of it. This is why Hegel does not see man as the kind of being that

somehow “has” understanding, the power of judgment and reason as distinct capacities, which he then “applies” somehow as effectively as possible. Man is rather a speaking being and in that a being of spirit and mind and only then, as it were, through the inner reflection of his linguistic capacity does he reach understanding, the power of judgment and reason. Keeping this basic relation in mind is of the greatest importance for understanding the *Phenomenology*. That work too will develop consciousness, self-consciousness and reason as internal reflections and outward embodiments of immediately existing mindful spirit, so that one can even say that for Hegel, reason on its subjective side is not some sort of “anthropological constant” or something that we always encounter in the “animal rationale” *per definitionem*, but that *resulting from the linguistic capacity of man* it is a factor derived from his existence immediately bound to language.

Of course consciousness does not stay on the level of its immediate language capacity. By the force of the opposition of consciousness—the double motion outward and inward—it sets itself against its other, what it has negated, and in this way it does indeed become an inner against an outer, an understanding that does *utilise* language, not merely *being* language. Once again Hegel starts out at an elementary level with the activity of naming, in which external units first emerge as qualitative being confronting consciousness. The same sort of thing happens with the practical existence of consciousness. By virtue of the fact that consciousness is inherently overcome nature, that it is “the ideality of nature” (GW VI, 276), consciousness is also in practical terms free to regard nature not as an insurmountable barrier but as something that in principle can be brought into relation with it. Spirit is for man not simply immediately linguistic, but also immediately *labouring*; labour is nothing other than the translation of the positive, merely *given external* into a negative, *acquired external* that exists for me and that does not simply stand against me as something alien. In labour nature is subordinated to freedom; again, man does not simply make use of labour in order to transform the world into his world, but he is in labour free; in labour he proves his freedom to be not simply an ideal but an actual process of living freedom. The tool, of which Hegel here also speaks, is then freedom turned into an external object, a thing, that is not really a ‘thing’, but something whose essence and meaning it is to overcome and idealise that quality of being a thing and to set it in relation to us.

Now, if consciousness unites with the world theoretically as *language* and practically as *labour* in the ways described above, then thirdly it is immediately related to other consciousnesses. Man as a natural being always has some kind of provenance, he never simply falls from the sky as an abstract subject, but stands in concrete and immediate relations of spirited mind with other

individuals. Hegel calls this third midpoint the *family*. Kant's transcendental apperception has, understandably on grounds of transcendental logic, neither father nor mother. Fichte's I also has neither, but instead deduces them both for itself. Hegel's concrete spirit is a mindful one immediately relating to other minds, it is spirited mind articulated in terms of *ethical life*. Later in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel finds in the family the substance of ethical life, i.e. a space in which the world—as it were even before I myself have even done anything to it—confronts me as already mine, already revealed to me and completely reliable. Even in Hegel's early philosophy we find the same view that the subject-object opposition is one that is inherently already eliminated and that subjective spirit proceeds on the assumption that it does not have to fashion *ab ovo* the concrete relation to its world. In *language*, which is also the memory of the language community, in the tool—objectivated *labour*—and in the *family*, (the world for me and as such a concrete good), objective spirit precedes the individual variety; the former is always more, especially more general, than the individual and as such is also a helpmeet to the individual's freedom and reason.

*Recognition* is another important topic appearing in the philosophy of mind of the first system draft. This buzzword, which began its career in idealism in Fichte's writings on practical philosophy, is, like the speculative concept of labour, especially linked to Hegel's name and will occupy us in greater detail in the *Phenomenology*. Here it appears at the end of the text in fragment 22 where Hegel develops the dialectical notion that "every speaking consciousness" becomes "immediately within that an other consciousness" (GW VI, 318). I elevate myself in the language—essentially not my own but a general language, the "*language of a people*" (GW VI, 317)—above my individuality; I represent myself to another consciousness; but through this relation to the other consciousness I *myself have already become another*. Speaking means differentiating oneself from oneself, it means being a synthetic, not just an analytical, unity. This appears to contradict immediate consciousness, which wants to present itself as identical, to be itself mindful spirit, i.e. overcome externality. Consciousness asserts itself against other consciousness as a subjective identity and since the other does exactly the same thing, their relation is initially a struggle for the dominant identity. It's all or nothing, for both sides "a struggle for the whole" (GW VI, 308), because each side knows itself to be a principle of unity so each must seek to negate the other. The dispute between these subjective identities and wannabe totalities can only be resolved by a totality, a relation that is essentially not subjectively constituted and which thus relies on a different principle of unity than that of the identity of consciousness. This principle can only be a spirited relation of differentiated identity, a freedom or

reason that is not only mine but also that of the other and which I know to be something I too must presuppose. Hegel describes it as an objective, indeed an absolute spirit of recognition in which no longer an individual but now a universal voice speaks—here in the Jena system drafts it is the voice of a people or also, as one might add, that of *right*, from the standpoint of which both see themselves as determined, differently determined to be sure. According to the principle that, as we already know, in every difference there lies a relation, in the relation of recognition the difference between the subjects is the self-differentiation of that objective spirit which is common to both; the subjects find their true unity, their totality outside themselves. In universal terms this means that no community of subjects can be derived from the principle of subjectivity alone. The philosophy of subjectivity leads to atomism not to community as a genuine possibility in Hegel's definition of it in the *Natural law* essay as "organic ethical life". Recognition in the sense of an ethical community is not dependent upon subjective will, it is much more a substantial prerequisite for the genuine possibility of subjective willing that is not always bound to fail because it runs into other subjective willing. In recognition subjective spirit knows itself to be a part of a world it does not immediately determine, but which on the contrary determines it. As we said, we have already entered the sphere of objective spirit.

## 2 System Draft II 1804/5

The most important system draft and the one which, although still fragmentary, is worked out in greatest detail is the second, now assigned to the years 1804/5.<sup>4</sup> For the first time we have an extended, almost complete logic as well as a very detailed philosophy of nature, which is of great interest for the transition from the ideal part of the system to the real part, that is for the question, how does Hegel move from the logical idea into nature? With the logic Hegel has arrived at what in fact constitutes the heart of his whole philosophy, namely the speculative-dialectical critique and reconstruction of the categories. His aim here is to elaborate the forms, the determinations, in which we do our thinking in terms of their relative finitude, to make it clear that all these forms together are not just some arbitrary agglomeration, but that they are known and recognised as moments of a system of thought. The philosophies of nature and of spirit deal with objects we can relate to externally, outside

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4 Cf. the English translation in G.W.F. Hegel, *The Jena System, 1804–5: Logic and Metaphysics*, translation edited by John W. Burbidge and George Di Giovanni, Kingston and Montreal 1986.

the concept, by bringing them into imagination or intuition. In contrast, logic makes us conscious of the determinations of thinking as such and in doing so it provokes the objection of common sense; for common thinking consists precisely in the fact that the categories or terms of thought are only to be *utilised*, while their form and character remain unquestioned and attention is not directed to them as such. The fact that we can only investigate logical terms with logical terms makes logical cognition reflexive, thinking about thinking. In the Jena period Hegel still understood logic as strictly a philosophy of reflection and contrasted it as “*systema reflexionis*” with a “*systema rationis*” that left the formality of logic behind and ends with the concept of spirit (not yet the realised spirit). The system draft of 1804/5 still differentiates logic in this sense from metaphysics so that it is from the latter that Hegel proceeds into the philosophy of nature. Later Hegel abandoned this distinction and it has been said with some justification that the *Science of Logic*, the mature logic of 1812–16, is Hegel’s metaphysics. If metaphysical statements are supposed to assert purely rational matters and thus have a content that goes beyond logical form, Hegel will later show that this content is only a function of the logical form. Logical form is “absolute form”, i.e. it gives itself its content and there is no other way to arrive at non-empirical contents than via logical form. The other that form posits or sets for itself does not then somehow fall ‘under’ it as in the common view of diverse objects falling under one general concept; instead the other is *produced* by the form itself. Clearly, logic and metaphysics are still distinct in Jena, indeed, in very general terms, they are distinct in the sense that *logic* describes a process of the idea of knowing coming to itself, while *metaphysics* assumes that knowing has already come to know itself so that it can then be taken as knowledge with content and no longer merely reflection on the forms of knowing. On this matter once again we can only give the most important points.

We have already spoken of the fact that for Hegel, as for all the idealists, the starting point of philosophy could be called an *a priori* of reason. Prior to all individual or determinate knowledge reason, or as the Jena Hegel put it, the *process of knowledge* itself, is the first factor behind which it is not possible to go in all the striving after knowledge that is philosophy. The effort of abstraction required of us in order to understand this starting point is that just for a moment we should set aside all our previously acquired knowledge, all the concrete cognition of things ever produced by a determinate logic of specific knowledge that is not the simple presence of knowing itself. What cognition then means in its purest and non-objective form cannot be explained to anyone by reference to something else, but then there is really no need to explain it to anyone, because everyone already knows the difference between knowing

and not knowing. Even somebody who claimed that he knows absolutely nothing would at least with that assertion confirm that he knows what knowing is in acknowledging his dissatisfaction with his own lack of it. Cognition or pure, still completely empty understanding is only the understanding of understanding and as such ‘absolute’. This is the sense in which Fichte spoke of the real topic of his *Theory of Science* as “the simply given understanding”, the understanding of which is “simply inseparable” from the process of understanding itself.<sup>5</sup> Hegel writes, “Philosophy as absolute knowing [what Hegel has in mind here is the self-unfolding of this absolute cognition by cognition itself] is immediately as such a thing posited or set, which is neither dependent upon nor assumed by any other, whether this other is thought of as knowing or as being”. Philosophy is the only truly *autonomous* science, because it does not begin from a specific, merely assumed difference between subjective capability for knowledge and something objective to be known. It digs deeper, starting with cognition before all separation into knowing and known by elaborating this opposition before anything else, that is as a moment of cognition getting to know itself, as the relation in which cognition stands to itself. In this process logic has the task of bringing out moments of this self-relation of cognition within the forms of knowing until at the end of the logic it can be said that “cognition is now established, set” (GW VI, 111), when, that is, knowing has been produced as the content of all its forms so that it has its own self-consciousness and no longer appears as simply given.

The Jena logic begins with the category of *simple relation*. Knowing taken in its absolute meaning is relation as such, better still, self-relation, actual differing, while the absence of knowledge is always immediately non-relation or dead difference. The whole subsequent path of this logic is then nothing other than an unfolding of the concept of relation, which clearly has immediately a positive and a negative value. It is as *relation* as such and so transmits the meaning ‘being’ while also setting a differing, a self-differentiation as the implication of self-relation, the negation of relation. Simple relation develops then into the set relation, already a more complex structure, in which passive relata and active moments of relation are always set together. Hegel distinguishes the “relation of being”, in which Kant handles his categories of relation, from the “relation of thinking”, in which concept, judgment and syllogism are

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5 Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre* 1814, in: R. Lauth ed. *Ultima Inquirenda. J. G. Fichtes letzte Bearbeitungen der Wissenschaftslehre Ende 1813/Anfang 1814*—Final Inquiry. J.G. Fichte’s last reworking of the *Wissenschaftslehre* at the end of 1813 and the beginning of 1814. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2001, p. 454 f. All attempts to begin with a ‘being’ not conceived of as relation take as their starting point for philosophy a ‘non-understanding’, cf. p. 453 and *passim*.

handled in terms of the extent to which distinct forms of relation as realisations of knowing are built up in them. Then under the heading “proportion” we find the real logical self-relation and the relations between relations, to put it briefly, the objective relations of being and the subjective relations of the concept. This includes what are formally methodological concepts like definition and disposition (division into components or sections), and ultimately the concept of truth, which is after all supposed to give expression to the congruence of an objectivity to a subjective knowledge of it. In the concept of truth, however, knowing as such is *set* and is the object of consciousness, in fact of *self-consciousness*. This is the point where the logic ends and moves on (at this stage in the development of Hegel’s system that is) to the beginning of metaphysics.

Metaphysical concepts in the sense of this System draft II, as can only be indicated here, are no longer concepts referring beyond themselves, which (like the logical concepts of this Jena system) would still have to be applied to something other than themselves; these metaphysical concepts are not on the look-out for suitable content. Since cognition is now *posited*, knowing is their universal ground and these metaphysical concepts are at rest within themselves, they explicate themselves so that each in this complete reflection into itself is also *transparent by itself*. This corresponds in a certain sense to Aristotle’s statement that “first philosophy”, as he calls metaphysics, has to do with objects or matters that are “transparent by themselves” and as such unprovable because they do not need a proof. Aristotle speaks of δι’ αὐτό γνωρίμων, *di’ auto gnotimon*, of “what is clear by itself” in first philosophy in this sense for example in the first book of the *Physics* and similarly in the *Analytics* as well as in the *Magna Moralia*.<sup>6</sup> In his progress through concepts clear in themselves then Hegel studies principles like identity and contradiction, that of excluded third and of sufficient reason and then moves on to the classical metaphysical topics of soul, world and God, finally turning to the theoretical and practical I, which he regards as a metaphysical topic, i.e. one satisfying and fulfilling itself. Later in the *Science of Logic* the I remains the principle example for the concept in the full sense of the term. In Jena this is followed by the final form of “absolute spirit”, in which metaphysics really first acquires full consciousness of itself, knowing itself now as comprehensively realised cognition (which is the *idea* in the later system). Metaphysics is conceived by Hegel in Jena at least in principle as a science of what is strictly self-relational, explicating itself on its own and without assistance from elsewhere. In this sense it

6 Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* II 1, 193 a 6; *Analytica posteriora* II 19, 100 b 5 ff.; *Magna Moralia* I 35, 1197 a 20 ff.

certainly distinguishes itself from, for instance, natural objectivity, which has to be explicated by another, but also from the dialectical course of logic coming to rest as it does in self-positing cognition. The I, for instance, is a metaphysical concept because it cannot be explained to anyone by reference to anything that is not itself the I and the only acceptable 'explanation' here is the self-explication of this concept itself. This is exactly how it happens with the classical metaphysical topics of soul, world and God; these again are not 'objects' anyone can point to but anticipations of *total* knowledge in respectively inner, outer and absolute terms. They stand for specific horizons of clarity each of which explicates itself by itself. The point of the 'ontological proof of God's existence' was always given in these terms and, after being stripped of all external connotations, it was picked up by the idealist philosophy and transformed into the 'principle of subjectivity' as the origin of the reason certain of itself.

At this point we have an abrupt caesura as the metaphysical self-illumination of cognition is followed by nature with its abstract basic concept as nothing other than the immediate *overcoming*, the annulling of the relation of knowing that has become reflexive and total by finding itself. Nature is thus primarily that which is not relational just as the general concept of space is one of unrelated dispersion, of infinite repulsion into the entropy of non-knowing. We cannot rely here on Kantian space as an *a priori* form of intuition, nor on mathematical orders of diversity, both of which are ideal images, which means that they are conceived by subjective knowing and the capacity for knowing. The space of nature is in fact that which makes a natural object inherently and *qualitatively* (not just relative to me) something external; it is that which ensures that the mind immediately knows with the natural object that this object is not mind but *something other*. The 'other' of knowing is, however, non-knowing or the annulled 'bond of knowing'. Obviously this is not all that philosophy has to say about nature. What can it say then as philosophy (and not as, say, spokesperson of the natural sciences) on nature? If philosophy is the absolute science of relationality, while nature is the space of what is essentially (among other things) unrelated, then the philosophy of nature can really only be about specific logics of not relating or of how non-relation relates itself to itself. Hegel attempts in this philosophy of nature to give a logic of natural relations that are in principle dissociated and turned outward, the relations of a nature that is not centred in itself. All this in fact amounts to a logic of relations that is essentially not logical, whose logic lies in the *negation* of the logical. This is why Hegel can also say that while nature does not confront us with an openness comparable to that of spirit, but rather closes itself within itself, nevertheless it certainly does contain something like an "imprisoned spirit" (GW VII, 179), really only an "inversion", which at least means there is a trace of

spirit there. It was one of the main claims of the *Dissertatio* that while nature is not simply concept, nor immediately corresponding to our concepts, it nevertheless produces from out of itself intelligibility, ideality, and does let itself be understood. Nature does not speak to us as one man speaks to another, but it does open itself to our language—just as (to use an image here that certainly cannot be pressed too far) the brush strokes in a painting open up into a picture “composed through seeing” them, which has its logical unity not in the material of which it is made, but only in the cognition that generates the image. The level on which nature in this sense most broadly ‘speaks’ is that of life. In life nature achieves a positive universality, a wholeness, which is *in itself* already spirit. For Hegel in Jena it is the life that knows itself which turns into consciousness as a first pattern of spirited mind, which, as we already know, is nature overcome into a self-presence of knowing that still only happens through the mediation of nature. At this point the circle only closes by pointing to the fragments on consciousness and language in the first system draft, this second draft lacks that conclusion as well as the transition to the philosophy of mind or spirit altogether.

### 3 System Draft III 1805/6

We find a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of spirit in the third draft of 1805/6. The description of chemical and organic processes goes into great detail. Language is important again in the philosophy of spirit, which also contains a systematic treatment of the functions of subjective spirit from *intuition*, which Hegel here calls the “knowledge of beings”, to *understanding* and *reason* and further to the *will* and *recognition*. Other topics discussed include *right*, the *state* and the *church*, finally *art*, *religion* and *science*, the forms of what will later be called *absolute spirit*. We quote here only the concluding remarks on philosophy, where the course through the various differences and relations in which the process of *coming to itself* and the conscious *being by itself* of cognition is completed.

In philosophy it is the I as such which is knowledge of the absolute spirit, in the concept in itself, as this, the universal.—Here the I *knows* the absolute; it knows—it comprehends—it is no other—immediate, it is this self.—The I is this inseparable linkage between individual and universal...—of all essence, of all thinking... This knowledge of philosophy is restored immediacy;—it is itself the form of mediation, of the concept.” (GW VIII, 286)

So the task of philosophy is to produce this in the individual, abolishing the difference between I and world, subject and object, knower and known and generating absolute unity as the motion through the differences. All this in fact only affirms once more, but this time from the conclusion, *that knowing is*, and that, despite all the factual irreconcilability, the objective structure of the world remains this being-by-itself of knowing, of reason and of truth. Clearly, even in the extremely abbreviated form in which we have represented Hegel's early drafts of systematic philosophy, we can see that the whole amounts to really not much more than programme and certainly not anything that could be seriously called execution. We only get to the real matter of the system in the main works. These programmatic initiatives have been criticised by Adorno, among others, who reproached Hegel with covering up the positive and abiding difference, namely that of the I and the world's factual state of being unreconciled. From Hegel's point of view it cannot be denied that there is such a thing as that which is immediately impenetrable, which is factually not to be encompassed, such as historical forms of unfreedom and irrationality. At the risk of sounding tautological it has to be said that nobody doubts the finitude of that which is inherently finite; what must be rejected, however, is that the finite, the irrational as such, should have the last word. As we have seen in the discussion of Hegel's dictum that the rational is also the actual, the protest against positive difference or existing irrationality is motivated by the goal concept of reason before which the irrational cannot be allowed to persist. If the history of humanity has any kind of purpose, then it is that knowing, cognition, the productive power of relation, should keep the upper hand over destruction, which without knowing, against which it turns its force, has absolutely no meaning whatsoever. Truth is also the measure of what is untrue, reason also of the irrational, so since Hegel sees the process of truth or of knowing as one that includes self-alienation, the production of superficial appearance and immediate otherness or difference, his is no cheap optimism. It is, however, the certainty of reason that in every pain suffered by the individual in his finitude there lies a hope—a hope that is also a memory that in itself *knowing is already there* or, as Hegel can also say, the absolute wants to be with us and is already here.

#### 4      *System of Ethical Life*

We should at least in passing discuss a short fragmentary text of Hegel's on practical philosophy, which was dated by earlier authors, including Rosenkranz, to Hegel's time in Frankfurt along with other texts now known to be from the Jena

period. The *System der Sittlichkeit* or *System of Ethical Life* is now dated to the autumn of the year 1802.<sup>7</sup> The text shows in its language and in its conceptual instruments (such as ‘subsumptions’) affinities to the Jena system drafts, while beyond that thematically there are points of connection with the *Natural law* essay. Its three parts, which only remotely anticipate the basic structure of the later *Philosophy of Right* are as follows. “I. Absolute ethical life on the basis of relation” (i.e. the logical concept of relation, standing here for what is universal, rational and eternal)—“II. The negative or freedom or crime”—“III. Ethical life”. Hegel formulates an alternative approach to practical philosophy from that of the reflection philosophy of his time, in particular to Fichte; here he relies especially on the concept of the ‘people or folk’ (*Volk*) as a true totality and with this he is promoting his conception of a philosophy of spirit, which emerges with ever greater clarity in the course of his development.

The text begins with the quintessentially post-Kantian issue of the “idea of an absolute ethical order” (GW v, 279). A social life actually representing the *totality* and in that sense absolute is completely unthinkable in all systems of ethics proceeding from reflection; there ethical life remains an *ought* that can never become an *is*, or, as Hegel says here, it is completely incapable of encompassing “intuition”. The “absolute ethical order”, which is also mentioned in the *Natural law* essay, is according to Hegel to be found where “perfect adequacy between intuition and concept is established” (ibid.). Love is a good example to illustrate what is meant here. Lovers, or true lovers at any rate, understand their being, their *is* also as an *ought*; the principle of love is that of self-sustenance in the other, i.e. in a form of self-surrender that makes one’s own being into a moment of a relation, while the lover at the same time knows he receives his own being back from the relation as a higher form of the self. This is what makes love as much intuitive as reflective and all the pain love causes happens when intuition and reflection fall out of unity. For Hegel the intuitive does take a relative priority. “But what is truly the universal is intuition, while what is truly particular is the absolute concept” (ibid.). Thus ethical life begins with an intuitively given instance, an immediacy of totality, which in the next step gives rise to particularity from out of itself. The lover recognises himself as what he is from the encompassing universal of the relation created by love; it is from this also that he knows what he should do. In just the same way the child (GW v, 289 f.) awakens to a self-conscious subjectivity from the prior acceptance it enjoys in the family and the citizen grasps his station in life by reference to “an absolute folk”, the “intuitive totality” that is the

7 Hegel, GW v, 279–361. Cf. the English translation by H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox in *G.W.F. Hegel, System of Ethical Life* (1802/3) and *First Philosophy of Spirit*, Albany 1979.

precondition for his existence (*ibid.*). It is important to note that ethical order is always a living relation, which is why it involves a mutual “subsumption” of intuition under the concept and of the concept under intuition. The individual then, insofar as it is subsumed by intuition, is feeling, also “practical feeling, or pleasure” (GW v, 282). When on the other hand the individual subsumes ethical intuition (for instance when it acts as a citizen or labours in any way), then it practically acquires the external object elevating it perhaps into a possession (cf. GW v, 284 f.). From these few remarks we can see that in Hegel’s view of ethical life we do not have a subject here endowed with the power to subjugate the external world and nature and reshape them according to reason; instead Hegel sees an interaction between world and individual aiming at building a maximally relational unity of differences as the life of freedom. If the decisive medium terms or midpoints, the mediations of the elementary ethical relation are the child, the tool (GW v, 291) and “speech or spoken language” (GW v, 293 ff.), in a subsequent “level of potency” more complex modes of mediation emerge where there is now “nothing that might not have relation to other intelligences” (GW v, 296). We have arrived in the sphere of that reflection known as the division of labour, of industrialisation (GW v, 297) and as such then of exchange (GW v, 301). We find here very impressive characterisations of epochal innovations in the text, such as when Hegel says “the tool turns into the *machine* as the turbulence of the subjective, of the concept, itself is set up or established outside of the subject” (GW v, 297). Commentators have often referred to these sections as showing that in the *System of Ethical Life* Hegel reveals himself to be a reader of the British national economists, especially of Adam Smith (1723–1790), whose new science of the systematic structure of external human relations was on the way to becoming the leading science of the new era. Hegel proceeds from the theory of exchange to that of the contract, thus to the elementary legal relation. In the contract, as Hegel sees it:

The moment of absolute presence found in pure exchange forms itself into a rational medium term, which does not merely permit the appearances of exchange, but requires them as necessary differences in order to be a totality, while in the contract they are reduced to indifference, to irrelevance. (GW v, 302)

The reference here to the “absolute presence”, pure presence in exchange, is very significant for its implication that a moment of “absolute ethical life” is indispensable to the constitution of the legal relation. No-one can conduct an exchange in terms of mere reflection, but only from the certainty of the reality of the ethical order—I exchange, because at least for a moment

I assume that the other does not deceive me and can be regarded as trustworthy. The contract here is not (as with professional ‘contract theorists’ right up to our day) merely an instrument, to be cleverly used in relations with others. With the contract then at last “mindful spirit” emerges in the sphere of the individuals, that “spirit . . ., in which the contract partners are eliminated as individuals” and “the absolute objective essence” is “the binding midpoint of the contract” (GW V, 303). The individual is here no subject-atom positioning itself via the contract with respect to other subject-atoms; it is originally “contractual”, i.e. in the contract it is subsumed under the universal.

Hegel next takes up the concept of the person and with that the “relation of *lordship* and *bondage*” (GW V, 305) originally bound to recognition in the constitution of the person—the famous topic we shall soon encounter in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and which can therefore be passed over here; suffice it to say that many of the knots in the phenomenological analysis will be resolved with the help of this version in the *System of Ethical Life* with all its references to the Jena system drafts.

In the second main section of the manuscript the basic concepts of justice and injustice are developed as they emerge into consciousness in terms of the domination of the immediacy of freedom and of the abolition of the immediate ethical order respectively. The freedom appearing as “*crime*” is linked to “*avenging justice*” (GW V, 312); it is incapable of isolating itself from life or spirit in such a way as to avoid being caught up by them, thus demonstrating its own lack of effective reality to itself even within the achievement of its own immediate goals. Hegel uses the example of the “fanaticism of devastation” here and says:

... outwardly this is insuperable, for difference and determination within it are subject to indifference and indefiniteness; but then it is negation as such, so this fanaticism has its negation within itself; formlessness drives it into indefiniteness . . ., just like a water bubble expanding so far that it eventually bursts into a myriad little drops. (GW V, 314)

Fanaticism and its “rage” (ibid.) cannot be negotiated with because it tolerates no limits to its own development; but then the inability to limit itself is the seed of its own overcoming. In the subsequent forms of what one can call *fighting freedom* the “devastation” is already subsumed under the concept (GW V, 315) and, to anticipate the third main section, it is not the least responsibility of the constitution of the state and the government to hold it in this subsumption. With the state constitution a form of qualified freedom emerges, whose inner structure Hegel describes starting from the “system of needs” on through the

administration of justice and all the way up to a briefly sketched “third system of government” (GW V, 360 f.), without, however, giving the complete development. The goal here is that in the realised ethical order “the living individual be as life equal to the absolute concept, that his empirical consciousness be one with absolute consciousness and absolute consciousness itself be empirical consciousness” (GW V, 324). Actually arriving at that point would amount to demonstrating the anticipation of the beginning, the “idea of absolute ethical life” realised in intuition and concept.

A biographical sketch of Hegel’s subsequent years in Jena now follows before we enter upon the discussion of our philosopher’s main works with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As we said above, Hegel had been trying to get away from Jena since 1805, and that not only for financial reasons, but also because the intellectual golden era of the city on the Saale was clearly waning and despite expressions of admiration from some of his students, he was feeling increasingly uncomfortable there. In the letter to Voß already quoted he writes:

You know yourself best of all that Jena has lost the interest, the capacity it once had in the sense of community and the tangible presence of progress in the sciences to inspire a vigorous confidence in the subject matter and self-confidence in anyone who ventured there.<sup>8</sup>

Hegel was unfortunately not able to get away and had to witness, from uncomfortably close quarters, the battle of Jena on 14 October 1806 in which Napoleon completely routed the Prussians. Napoleon was in Jena on 13 October and later that same day Hegel wrote a letter to his friend the theologian Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766–1848), which is often misquoted to suggest that Hegel thought he saw in Napoleon the world spirit in person riding on a horse. Here’s some of what he really said:

Yesterday evening just before sunset I saw the gunfire of the French patrols in the Gempenbachtal and in Winzerla; the Prussians were driven out of the latter in the night . . . today between 8 and 9 the French *tirailleurs* [snipers] forced their way [into the city]—and one hour later the regular troops came in. This was a time of anxiety, especially because of people’s unfamiliarity with the sight which, according to the will of the French emperor, everyone enjoys against these light troops . . . the emperor—this world soul—I saw riding out through the city reconnoitering;—it is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual,

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<sup>8</sup> Hegel, *Briefe* v. I, no. 55, p. 98. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 106.

who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse, reaches out over the world and dominates it.<sup>9</sup>

In the same letter Hegel mentions his concern for a manuscript, parts of which he sent to his publisher in Bamberg on 8 and 10 October and the remainder he had been carrying with him in his bag since the thirteenth of the month, when his apartment was occupied by the French and he was forced to flee. He's talking about the *Phenomenology*, the last pages of which he finally managed to send off to Bamberg on 20 October, quite literally in the midst of the confusion of war. It arrived safely at his publishers and the whole book, together with a preface sent in January 1807, appeared the next year. When Hegel was driven out of his home by the French soldiers he managed to pacify them with a couple of bottles of wine. After returning later, as he wrote again to Niethammer, he found his "papers thrown around by the knaves in total disorder like lottery tickets".<sup>10</sup> Hegel was in acute financial straits and once again Goethe helped him out.<sup>11</sup> He could no longer remain in Jena and in February 1807 he took leave from the university to take the job as editor of the *Bamberger Zeitung*, which Niethammer, then state councillor in the Bavarian administration of schools and churches, arranged for him. Hegel was not too happy with what he sometimes called the "newspaper galleon".<sup>12</sup> Already on the 30 May 1807 he wrote to Niethammer that "this work cannot be regarded as a respectable position" and that he wanted a job "in connection with the state".<sup>13</sup> He stuck it out until November 1808. In the autumn of that year he finally found a more attractive post. Once again through Niethammer's good offices Hegel became "professor of the philosophical preparatory sciences and rector of the Ägidien gymnasium" in Nuremberg, a position he held until 1816. The post was rendered attractive especially by a recent school reform that bore Niethammer's signature. In that year, 1808, in Bavaria the "introduction into the speculative study of the ideas" became one of the principal tasks of the gymnasium. From the age of 16, the pupils were to receive four hours of philosophy every week. Hegel taught theory of law and pragmatic ethics, phenomenology and logic and finally also philosophy as such (then officially termed "philosophical encyclopaedia")

9 Ibid., no. 74, p. 120. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 114.

10 Ibid., no. 76, p. 124. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 116.

11 Goethe's note to Knebel in Nicolin, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*—Hegel in the accounts of his contemporaries, Hamburg 1970, p. 77.

12 Hegel, *Briefe* v. I, no. 127, p. 240. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 167.

13 Hegel, *Briefe* v. I, no. 98, p. 167. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 130.

as well as philosophy of religion. Rosenkranz gathered the notes of the students together into a “philosophical propaedeutic”, which first appeared in 1840 in the edition of the so-called *Freundesverein des Verewigten*—the Association of Friends of the Deceased, but manuscripts found later have altered the impression given by Rosankranz’ edition. One thing there is no doubt about is that what Hegel presented his students with was no easy stuff; nevertheless, from all that we know he put a lot of dedication into the lessons and was much respected by the pupils. One of his best known students was Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800–1875), the man who was entrusted with the education of Kaspar Hauser, the strange foundling of Nuremberg. Daumer became a figure in the neomythology movement of the nineteenth century. It was in Nuremberg that Hegel wrote his greatest work, the *Science of Logic*, with the first part, the logic of being, appearing in 1812, the second, the logic of essence, in 1813, and the third, the logic of the concept, in 1816. That year, 1816, brought Hegel three options for returning to university life. In Erlangen he was offered a professorship in philology and in Berlin he could have become Fichte’s successor, but disagreements with the faculties in Erlangen and Berlin caused him to take up the offer from Heidelberg, which had been his preferred destination in 1805. His lectures in Heidelberg were based on a sketch of his system, the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline* of 1817. Later in Berlin the work went through two subsequent editions. In Heildeberg Hegel lectured on aesthetics, anthropology and psychology, history of philosophy and logic. He also assumed the position of editor of the *Heidelbergischen Jahrbücher der Literatur*—Heidelberg annual review of literature, and one of his contributions to the publication was a review in which he once again expressed his position on Jacobi, which in the interim had become more favourable than in *Faith and Knowledge*.

In Heidelberg Hegel found new students and friends who promoted his philosophy. Perhaps the most prominent among them was Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Hinrichs (1794–1861), later professor of philosophy in Breslau and Halle. Hinrichs did his habilitation in Heidelberg in 1819 and Hegel contributed an extensive preface to his book on the philosophy of religion of 1822.<sup>14</sup> The Lutheran theologian Karl Daub (1765–1836) supported the proposal to offer Hegel the professorship from the start and he gave a lecture course on the *Phenomenology* after Hegel left Heidelberg which he later published. The last we can mention here is the Frenchman Victor Cousin (1792–1867), professor of the history of philosophy at the *École normale* in Paris, who visited Hegel

14 Hegel, *Vorrede zu Hinrichs’ Religionsphilosophie*—Preface to Hinrichs’ *Philosophy of Religion*, TW 11, 42–67.

in Heidelberg in 1817 and, if in the spirit of a certain eclecticism, became one of the first to introduce Hegel's philosophy to the French. At the end of 1817 Hegel received the offer of the chair in Berlin from the Prussian first minister of culture, Karl Freiherr vom Stein zum Altenstein, which still meant becoming Fichte's successor. This time Hegel did not decline and moved to Berlin for the winter semester 1818/19. In his inaugural lecture he praised that "university at the midpoint" at which "the *midpoint* of all education and all science and truth, *philosophy* too" must be able "to find its place and best cultivation".<sup>15</sup> Indeed he sees himself there greeted by "the *dawn of a stronger and more mature spirit*" in which "*philosophy will [again] have content*" and can discard the "vanity" of a cleverness of reflection lacking in seriousness.<sup>16</sup> In the years following Hegel experienced the real high point of his fame, with occasionally up to two hundred people attending his lectures. He was favoured by the ministry of culture, becoming rector of the university in 1829, and acquired an influence on the intellectual life in Germany that, for a philosopher, was second to none. Hegel became a real crowd puller at the university and again published a journal, the *Berliner Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*—Berlin annual review of scientific criticism. Annoyances like the young lecturer Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), demonstrating his contempt by timing his lectures to coincide with Hegel's, or the old theologian Schleiermacher, who at least succeeded in keeping Hegel out of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, ultimately did not really diminish his stature. On 14 November 1831 Hegel died at home in Berlin, as at first reported, from cholera, which reached Berlin from Hamburg in the summer of 1831, although he may instead have succumbed to a chronic stomach problem that had been plaguing him for some years. Philipp Konrad Marheineke (1780–1846), theologian and friend, gave the eulogy in the great hall of the university, while the funeral oration at the grave site was given by the historian and curator of the Berlin Museum, Friedrich Christoph Förster (1791–1868). Hegel lies buried in the Dorotheenstädter cemetery, according to his wish, beside Fichte. The obsequies were attended by, according to a notice in the *Allgemeine Preußische Staatszeitung*—General Prussian state newspaper, of 17 November 1831, "all professors and students of the university as well as very many friends and former students of the deceased".<sup>17</sup> The diplomat Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785–1858), known through his literary

15 Hegel, *Berliner Antrittsrede*—Berlin inaugural address, in *Berliner Schriften (1818–1831)*—Berlin Writings, ed. W. Jaeschke, p. 44. Cf. the English translation in *Hegel's Political Writings* ed. Lawrence Dickey and H.N. Nisbet, Cambridge 1999, p. 182.

16 Ibid. 47; cf. Dickey and Nisbet, p. 185.

17 Nicolin p. 485.

diary, the *Tageblätter*, as a chronicler of the first half of the nineteenth century in Germany, with whom Hegel was well acquainted in Berlin, wrote on 5 December 1831 to Goethe, “I will say nothing of the great loss we have suffered here. Since Hegel is no longer one feels only now just what a space he filled and how active he was. Without such energetic concentration in the head and the hand of individual regents, the sciences fall apart in confusion and rebel against their nearest superior, and they will soon have to pay for the foolish joy they now feel at having dispensed with a burdensome supervision.”<sup>18</sup> Hegel’s successor, Georg Andreas Gabler (1786–1853), had been a student of his since the Jena years and worked as a private tutor to Schiller’s sons. He published a comprehensive account of Hegel’s philosophy in 1843.<sup>19</sup> Gabler had studied the work we will now turn to, leaving biography aside, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, when it first appeared.

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18 Ibid. 501.

19 G.A. Gabler, *Die Hegelsche Philosophie*, Berlin 1843.

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PART 2

*Phenomenology and Science of Logic*

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## Anamnesis of the Human Spirit—*Phenomenology*

### 1 Introductory Discipline and System Component

Under the title *System of Science, first part, the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel's first major work appeared in April 1807 published by Joseph Anton Goebhardt of Bamberg and Würzburg. The title makes clear that the book is not designed to stand alone, but as a *propylon*, the entrance gate to the whole system. It cannot be said that in Hegel's subsequent development the *Phenomenology* maintained this introductory function. In the end it was integrated in much reduced form into the completed system as the theory of consciousness, the second part of the philosophy of subjective spirit. In fact, of course, the immense wealth of material in the *Phenomenology* makes it impossible to regard this work as merely a means to an end; it has to be understood in its own terms. We encounter Hegel here still as a theoretician of consciousness and that much he has in common with his contemporaries, who were still either inspired by and/or reacting against Kant. He sets himself apart from them, however, by no longer regarding consciousness as mere form, but as the respective instance of in various cases differently determined spirit and mind. Following the Jena system drafts consciousness is no longer a descendent of the Cartesian "ego cogito" nor of Kant's "transcendental apperception". Now it is in each of its patterns already a concrete universal, determinate, spirited immediacy of the totality and as such committed to mediating and communicating that totality. Hegel's theory of consciousness is never abstract epistemology nor is it confined to *Wissenschaftslehre*—theory of knowledge, in Fichte's sense (who also recognised the need for an introduction to philosophy), rather immediately and from the first stroke of the pen it is what in German is known as *Realphilosophie* (the collective term for the philosophies of nature and of mind or spirit as opposed to "logic and metaphysics", the traditional designation Hegel always used for his logic lectures). The *Phenomenology* thus presents a theory of actually existing cognition, a topography of knowledge landscapes, which in their determinacy are precisely not constructs *a priori*, but which emerge as empirically transparent determinate configurations of objective knowing. Consciousness is "appearing" knowledge in the double sense that on the one hand, given its form, it always contains a moment of deceptive appearance (of *δόξα*, *doxa*, as Plato would have put it) and hence is never immediately absolute knowledge, while on the other it is knowledge revealing itself to be

appearance as it appears to other knowledge. A few remarks should help at the outset to understand better what Hegel does, experimentally it has to be said, in his *Phenomenology*.

Consciousness as such (we recall Reinhold's principle of consciousness) is always characterised by the difference it makes between itself and its object; at the same time in its objective relation consciousness strives to produce or demonstrate the unity of itself with its object, that is, to become *knowing* consciousness. The logical projection of this fundamental structure of consciousness as a whole is the *judgment* or *proposition*, which encapsulates the duality or bifurcation, the antinomical view of the world as inner and outer worlds, knowing and known, subject and object or in whatever other terms one wishes to put it. The disjunction into these two sides appears to be complete so that there is no 'healthy' consciousness that does not think in terms of the immediate difference between the 'world out there' and itself 'here within'. In all this, however, we have simultaneously the urge of consciousness to produce the unity overcoming this disjunction, that is to arrive at the totality directly indicated by the copula in the proposition. In the most general terms, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel works through the different patterns of consciousness—"natural consciousness" that is, as initially always only immediate knowledge—in its self-differentiation from the object of consciousness. The pathway through the patterns should lead to consciousness' knowledge of itself, enabling it to deliver knowledge not merely via an external relation, but actually to be the relation of knowing itself while simultaneously having been overcome into this relation, which should be the point where philosophy can really begin. The *Science of Logic*, the first part of the system, will presuppose that the opposition of consciousness, that immediate division of the world into subject and object, knower and known, etc., has been overcome. We have already seen that for Hegel the ground of philosophy is principally a thinking of thinking and not primarily a thinking of something, that the ground is strictly self-referential knowledge and no longer knowledge objectively oriented. This structural premise of the (open or concealed) self-referentiality holds for Hegel for *all philosophical knowledge* and indeed even then when philosophy does turn to external objects such as the phenomena of nature, of history, law or art. In these terms then, the programme of philosophy lies in *revealing objectivity to be self-relation*. This holds no less for logic, for the thinking that must turn from dealing with an *other* to one dealing with *itself*, as it does for nature—natural phenomena too are likewise to be viewed as (broken) self-relations, thus not as the immediate other of consciousness, but rather as setting themselves against consciousness. It holds in the eminent sense, of course, for spirit, which already as that simple thought I is in the purest sense a relation

of being-by-itself within otherness, self-identification via self-differentiation. That is the programme—and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* seeks to show us the way to this position after leaving the immediate standpoint of intentional knowledge and the objective, positive difference behind. To this end it unfolds a vast panorama of patterns of consciousness, which, as the first fleeting look inside the book shows, are significantly different in both ‘psychological’ and historical terms as indeed they are in terms of the respective ranges of the knowledge they embody. The table of contents of the *Phenomenology* offers a colourful diversity of patterns or cross-sections of the mind and it is at first not at all clear what they have to do with each other. Titles like “Sense certainty” and “Perception” for instance are familiar from the theory of subjective knowledge; “Lordship and bondage”, “Ethical lifeworld” and “State of law” on the other hand seem to refer to social philosophy and still others like “Observation of nature” and “Physiognomy and craniology” belong to natural science. “Enlightenment” or “Absolute freedom and the terror” would be assigned to history, while the titles “Religion” and “Art” refer to quite distinct spheres in the life of human beings. There are even some titles that appear to be rather amusing and as such quite perplexing to the inexperienced reader, at first at least. One example is the title “The law of the heart and conceit”, another “The animal kingdom of the spirit and deception or the matter itself”. In fact it soon becomes clear that with all these titles Hegel is addressing very specific positions of the I with respect to the world and to the other I, which together do constitute something of a catalogue of ideal types standing for whole historical epochs, while also possessing their own very specific logics forming the subject as well as the object. In each case it is a logic demonstrating both the relative rights of the given pattern of consciousness and its relative finitude, its logical limit. What we have here is thus a great cycle of the relationships between consciousness and the world that should reveal a self-determining logical sequence leading to “absolute knowledge”, the standpoint of cognition purely knowing itself, that is of philosophy. Within the cycle there are several subdivisions, including changes of level, which we will discuss individually. The basic principle is always that of a consciousness seeking to interpret the world in definite terms or, which amounts the same thing, to project itself into that world. This it can only do by implementing its respective categorial foundational structure, which vis à vis the world it only has immediately, i.e. unreflectively, driving it to the inevitable consequences, which is what constitutes the experience with itself, with its own (respective) finitude, a finitude of its logical form. *Apropos* finitude, the claim that finitude is the defining characteristic of consciousness as such was a view held not only by Hegel’s sceptical contemporaries. The subject-object disjunction itself is nothing without it.

Nevertheless there is in consciousness as existing cognition also a moment of what is, correctly understood, “true” infinity, that is of the overcoming of fixed difference into living difference. The implication of this for the programme of the *Phenomenology* is that the statement “all determinate knowing is finite” does not really tell us much outside the perspective of abstract scepticism. The point is that determinate knowing is in each case *differently finite* and this differentness contains the potential for relating them to each other in the sense of a “system of finitudes”. It is only in the rarest cases that finite knowing simply stands beside other finite knowing without any links. The form characteristic “finite” is not the same thing in a mythological relation of the I to the world as in one of quantificational physics, as documented in the conflict in which the two relations ineluctably end up. If differences here are also relations, i.e. potential for knowing, then they themselves push on to the “system of finitudes”, confirming once again the need for totality; cognition’s urge to infinity, which can only be satisfied by the knowing of knowing, gives it no rest before “absolute” knowing.

Hegel put an ad for the *Phenomenology* in the *Intelligenzblatt der Jenaischen Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung*—Newsletter of the Jena general literature magazine. An excerpt from it follows.

This volume describes the *genesis of knowledge*. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is designed to replace psychological explanations and abstract accounts of the foundation of knowledge. It considers the *preparation* for knowledge from a point of view that makes it a new, interesting and, indeed, the first science of philosophy. It comprehends the various *patterns of mind and spirit* as stations on the path by which they become pure knowledge or absolute spirit. Thus in the main sections of this science, which themselves are further subdivided, consciousness, self-consciousness, observational and active reason and mindful spirit itself in its customary ethical, educated, moral and finally religious manifestations are all considered in their different shapes. The wealth of forms in which mind and spirit manifest appears at first sight chaotic, but here it is brought into scientific order by its own necessity in which incomplete forms become untenable and pass into higher forms, being their proximate truth. Ultimate truth they find in religion and then in science as the result of the whole.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Hegel, *Selbstanzeige der Phänomenologie*—Ad for the *Phenomenology*, in: GW IX, 446.

The ad ends with the announcement that a second volume of the system will contain logic or speculative philosophy and two further volumes will be devoted to the philosophies of nature and of mind and spirit.

When Hegel says in his announcement that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* represents a “new . . . first science of philosophy”, he was certainly right as far as the newness was concerned. The *Phenomenology* unquestionably represents a completely new type of philosophical text, a genre that prior to Hegel simply did not exist. No-one before Hegel had written a history of the patterns of consciousness with the intention of bringing out the logic of knowledge by means of reconstructing and simultaneously destroying these patterns of consciousness. Only Plato’s dialogues come to mind, which are forms of the indirect communication of philosophy by means of orchestrating specific ideal types of patterns of consciousness. In fact, the author of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* does take upon himself a kind of Socrates role. He condemns finite knowledge for its finitude, or rather he lets it condemn itself and gains from this *elenchos* the new concept or the logos. But in this procedure Hegel is not only Socratic; one could also describe his approach as hermeneutic. He seeks actually to understand patterns of consciousness, indeed in the end to understand them better than they are capable of doing so themselves being merely immediate forms of knowledge which have not “gone into themselves”. The whole thing does not happen here just to roll out the colourful diversity and plurality of forms of consciousness as such, but in order to raise awareness of the fact that in all these patterns it is *knowledge itself* that is the inner lawmaker—as it is also the goal, the telos of the path of this introductory science. Here are a few points for initial orientation and something of a ‘users’ guide’ to reading the *Phenomenology*.

1. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is, as Hegel says in the ad quoted above, an account of “the genesis of knowledge”. It grasps the constitution, the initial emergence of a specific form of knowledge and then also of philosophical knowledge as a process, a dynamic phenomenon. We recall that in the *Logic and Metaphysics* of 1804/05 (*System draft* II) cognition, understood as pure knowing that is not yet “knowing something”, appeared as the real *a priori* of reason, as the first principle of philosophy behind which there is nowhere to go. Cognition as this *a priori* of reason then develops in logical, metaphysical and real-philosophical terms in specific relations of knowing, in relations in which for instance knower and known are relatively distinct while always linked together. All determinate knowledge appears philosophically as reflexive unfolding of absolute knowing itself, so it must be kept in mind that for Hegel (and certainly not only for him) all genuinely philosophical knowledge is reflexive knowledge

and no simple intentional or objective knowledge of things. Natural consciousness on the other hand, immediate thinking and knowing, as also thinking in the sciences, is directed to objects; it takes up a position within the “opposition of consciousness”, the difference between thought and matter, concept and object, and strives to find its way out of this difference into a unity, the dissolution of the opposition in thinking, i.e. to knowledge. The decisive point in Hegel’s phenomenological initiative is that it does not take the opposition of consciousness as fixed and final or static, but turns the constitution of knowledge into a process and in that, one could say, lets it emerge from the interplay of many ‘variables’. If we consider this fundamental principle from both sides of the opposition of consciousness, in relation that is to the differentiation of I and world, of subject and object, then we can make the following observations.

a) First, Hegel, with Kant, questions the assumption that for our knowledge there could be anything like an object that is constant in its own terms, a determinate world invariable in its contents. We have already quoted Kant’s central axiom from the fundamental chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which states that “the conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are at the same time conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*”.<sup>2</sup> Kant’s axiom here says that a specific knowledge of the world can only happen within the logic of the modes of relation of the subject to the world or to its objects and that in that sense all determinate objectivity is a function of subjective relations, a performance of the subjective perspective as determined by the subjective conditions of experience in general, which have to be worked out by transcendental philosophy. Against this, in all dogmatic thinking ‘objectivity’ or reality is, as it were, an iron constant to which thinking has to adjust itself and take up into itself, however this is supposed to happen. In the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel says that the ‘naïve procedure’ of dogmatic thinking, i.e. metaphysics in its various forms all the way down to the metaphysics of everyday consciousness, is characterised by the “*belief... that through thinking things over the truth comes to be known* and that what the objects truly are” can be “brought before consciousness”.<sup>3</sup> What we have here is the opinion, the assumption that the norm and standard of knowledge lies only on one side, i.e. with the things in themselves, compared to which thinking and knowing have only accidental significance. This position was completely undermined by Kant. Kant’s “Copernican turn” in philosophy lay in the claim that “reason only has insight into what it itself produces according to its own design”, that reason thus confronts nature “not in the character of a student, ... but in that

<sup>2</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 197/A 158; cf. Ch. 2, fn. 8, p. 36 above.

<sup>3</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 26.

of a senior judge".<sup>4</sup> There is no going back to the naïveté of believing that the truth of knowledge 'in itself' lies concealed in the things and we only have to keep our understanding free from all preconceptions in order to reproduce this truth for ourselves.

b) Hegel does not stay with the Kantian position. Kant insisted on the dependence of the world or objectivity on the subjective conditions of the possibility of experience in general, but he knows nothing of the dependence of a determinate subject upon the world. In fact, for Kant the subject is the real constant that remains after the objective has been rendered dynamic; the subject is in its kernel the formal identity of consciousness as form and focus of all knowledge and with this identity it is equipped with very well-defined functions for maintaining identity, especially the twelve pure concepts of the understanding or *categories*. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* does not let this Kantian differential of identical subjectivity over here *versus* variable world over there stand; rather it presupposes a subject already materially determined by its relation to the world. Now what does this mean? It means first, that Hegel adds an inverted form of the quoted Kantian fundamental axiom: the conditions of possibility of the objects of experience are just as much conditions of possibility of the *experience* of these objects. This means that the world a subject has and to which it relates also determines in material terms the consciousness of the subject. The point is that there is no such thing as subjectivity *as such*, there is only subjectivity *determined* in each case by the world it has or relates to in determinate modes. Clearly this principle immediately acknowledges differentiation in historical or psychological terms or generally in terms of the intellectual history of subjectivity. Once again, if Kant conceives of the subject as a constant formal principle of the identity of experience and of the making of experience as such, Hegel sees the subject as variable such that it is materially determined by the experience that it actually makes or undergoes. Hegel explains *both* subject and object from the relation into which they enter and in which they are both first, as it were, brought up to date with each other. He regards the determinacy in which a subject has a world and in which the world is there for a subject as the decisive *medius terminus*, medium term, the midpoint defining the material form of determinate subjectivity as well as of determinate objectivity. Within this midpoint of determinacy lies also the cognition, the knowing that is caught up in pursuing its own self-development, the encompassing relation of truth, so then subject and object, inner and outer, thinking and being are understood as functions of that midpoint. This is the general precondition for the programme of a *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for the possibility of conceiving

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4 Kant *ibid.* B XIII.

of a knowledge in genesis, that is “becoming, i.e. emerging and developing” and which in this way is in the process of finding itself. Thus Hegel’s philosophy is not any kind of consciousness or identity philosophy; Hegel stands here too for a philosophy that regards difference—for instance that between subject and object, thus the opposition of consciousness—as a mediation, as seeking and finding a materially determinate relation. A very simple application of this fundamental principle is that there is no *immediately* external standard for the comparison between different patterns of consciousness and versions of the world. Since consciousness never appears as mere form, but always as a definitely qualified pattern (*Gestalt*), types of consciousness and their worlds can be immediately incommensurable with one another. Their unity is then hidden somewhere beyond the opposition of consciousness only revealing itself to philosophy. Hegel’s philosophy thus accepts the possibility of acknowledging the historical, cultural or even logical differentness of forms of consciousness, which are then not treated as if they were all directly comparable with an identical standard. This is the basis on which the *Phenomenology of Spirit* seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of ideal types of patterns of consciousness, of forms of concretely unfolding knowledge.

2. To describe this process of self-developing, of becoming knowledge which in the end arrives at itself, the *Phenomenology* makes use of certain conceptual means with which one must be familiar in order to understand the path of the speculative development of the forms of knowledge. One fruit of Hegel research has been the distinction between *operative* and *thematic* concepts in Hegel’s philosophy.<sup>5</sup> What this means is that, despite the fact that Hegel’s philosophy ultimately does *not* make any hard and fast distinction between form and content, the concepts taken as the topic of a given investigation can and must be distinguished from the concepts used in order to conduct the investigation. Here we give only the most important of these operative or *architectonic*<sup>6</sup> concepts in the *Phenomenology*. First then, the *phenomenological* consciousness conducting the investigation follows distinct *phenomenal* patterns of consciousness to the point where it, *phenomenological* consciousness, finds itself involved and then it lets that *phenomenal* consciousness raise

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5 Cf. especially U. Richli, *Form und Inhalt in G. W. F. Hegels “Wissenschaft der Logik”*—Form and content in G.W.F. Hegel’s “Science of Logic”, Vienna and Munich 1982, p. 42 ff.

6 Cf. C.-A. Scheier, *Analytischer Kommentar zu Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes. Die Architektonik des erscheinenden Wissens*—Analytical commentary on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The architectonic of appearing knowledge, Freiburg and Munich 1982.

it to the next level of the investigation and ultimately, of course, onto the level of genuinely philosophical, *absolute* knowledge. The commitment of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to introducing philosophy makes it, in modish terms, something of an 'interactive' text. There is no way dispassionately to 'read' this text; you have to get involved. It is confusing to talk of consciousness investigating consciousness; but then the principle will be familiar that like is known to like; in principle then reflexive knowledge and self-knowledge are possible. Still distinguishing between what is under consideration from the consciousness conducting the investigation, i.e. the reader, is of course methodologically vital; truth for the consciousness under investigation is not necessarily the truth for the reading consciousness. This gives us on the level of the operative concepts the distinction between *being-for-itself* and *being-in-itself*. Truth for the consciousness being studied does not necessarily appear to be *in itself* truth for the reading consciousness. For instance, a consciousness still committed to the standpoint of dogmatism, which thus sees itself merely as an accidental and inessential participant in the elaboration of truth, might be regarded by a reading consciousness that has already adopted the standpoint of Kant's critical philosophy as one that is 'in itself' untrue. This distinction between *being-for-itself* and *being-in-itself* also reflects the opposition of consciousness itself; for every consciousness of whatever kind distinguishes according to this opposition between what is *for it* and what is *in itself*, i.e. objective, or what is supposed to be objective, and strives to bring the two sides into agreement.<sup>7</sup> It is for this agreement, in which being-for-itself and being-in-itself become coextensive, that Hegel uses the term *being-in-and-for-itself*. Being-in-and-for-itself is the consciousness *expressing* the unity of its opposition, which is what makes it *knowing* consciousness, consciousness that stands on the level of a knowledge for which objectivity has been opened up, revealed. Being-in-and-for-itself does not have to express an ultimate condition, it can be a relative one; it can be a still finite form of the self and of becoming a self, of the attained form of reflexivity; but it is certainly a definite form of selfness, a definite level of the emergence into awareness of the unity of the opposition of consciousness. While the distinction between being-for-itself and being-in-itself initially characterises an appearing knowledge, or what is the same thing, a knowledge

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7 It is certainly the case that what is (objectively) being-in-itself can be regarded as a 'being-for-itself', but then strictly speaking only if it has attained a developed self-relation on its own, i.e. when it has become 'substantial' (and is thereby in a concealed way subjective). We shall discuss the dialectic of substance and subject later; suffice it to say here that it comes down to the claim that what is genuinely knowable is only a self by a self (and only in *this* sense is like known by like), because cognition is essentially self-relation.

only of appearances not of their *in-itself*, appearance is overcome in being-in-and-for-itself and has become actual knowledge. In other words the *essence*, another operative concept in the *Phenomenology*, sought by consciousness through appearance and appearing knowledge has been incorporated and posited, explicitly set by consciousness—at first at least for this consciousness itself if not yet immediately for the reading consciousness or for the phenomenologist, who has the goal, the endpoint, the purely self-referential knowledge completely unfolding itself out of itself, always in mind. This endpoint is the pure self of knowledge, which on the pathway is always only sought after and provisionally found in external or objective constellations, but never known as such free of contradictions. One can say that every consciousness is always looking for its self, for the equality between itself and the matter it is thinking about. The problem is that finite consciousness projects this self in finite, objective, image or representational forms. It is as if it externalises itself into the world only to learn that there is no external form, nor any other kind of consciousness, just as there is no interiority rendered somehow absolute (we are thinking here of Fichte's idealism) that might be capable of expressing the real self or the unity of thought and the matter thought about. The dynamic in the process of becoming knowledge derives precisely from the fact that the results, the mediations arrived at are all initially just immediate overcomings of the opposition of consciousness still bearing the determinacy from which they derive, so even as new patterns of the opposition of consciousness, they do not necessarily amount to its overcoming as form as such. This condition is only fulfilled when knowledge overcomes the opposition *explicitly* and not just implicitly, when it knows itself to be no longer merely *objectively* mediated, but as purely mediated with itself by itself, grounding itself and generally setting itself as reflexive knowledge. It is on this level then, as we said, that philosophical thinking begins in the narrower sense and where, with the end of the *Jena Logic* of 1804/5, it can be said that “cognition may now be presumed.”

3. A third aspect is the panorama of patterns of consciousness that Hegel lays out before us in the determinacy of their contents. It has already been mentioned that the materials can appear very disparate at first sight. What after all might a theory of “sense certainty” or “perception” have to do with a section on “the beautiful soul, evil and its forgiveness”? What can an analysis of phrenology, a form of anthropometry still *en vogue* in 1807, have to do with the analysis of art and religion? Hegel himself said in his announcement ad that “the wealth of forms in which mind and spirit manifest appears at first sight chaotic”. This chaos, this immeasurable manifold should be illuminated by an inner logic, by a “scientific order”. Now, of course, this is something that would only be accepted by one who already knows that all human knowledge is just

an expression of knowing striving to find itself, which implies that all determinate forms of this knowledge *in themselves* are mutually related forms of this striving for knowing working themselves out through and against each other by determinate negation while ultimately being completed by each other. How this happens in detail will be shown on the pathway through the contents of the *Phenomenology*; first a few pointers to the overall structure of the work. Hegel indicated in his letter to Schelling of 1 May 1807 that unevenness may occasionally be encountered in the overall organisation. He says that “going into great detail has . . . damaged the aspect of the whole,” which itself is certainly “by its nature such an interlacing of cross-references back and forth that, even if it were set better in relief, would still cost me much time to bring it out more clearly and in more finished form.” Then he refers to a “lack of form in the last sections,” which he excuses by saying that he “actually completed the last corrections to the manuscript in the middle of the night before the battle of Jena.”<sup>8</sup> Some interpreters have gone beyond these remarks of Hegel’s with their doubts as to the degree to which the *Phenomenology* can be considered a finished work. Since Rudolf Haym<sup>9</sup> in the nineteenth and Theodor Haering<sup>10</sup> in the twentieth century, the suggestion that Hegel changed the whole plan of the book during the writing has become a commonplace. The most important version of this claim is that an ‘Urphenomenology’ comprised only the sections Consciousness, Self-consciousness and Reason, that is chapters I to v, and then in the system the *Logic* would have followed on from the Reason chapter. Haering even believed that the *Phenomenology* was originally meant to finish with the subsection on “Logical and psychological laws”, after only the first third of the Reason chapter. Such claims are certainly supported by the fact that both in the theory of consciousness, i.e. the phenomenology, he taught at the gymnasium in 1808/9 and then every year in Nuremberg thereafter as well as in the short version he later gave in the *Encyclopaedia*, the phenomenological development does indeed only go as far as the Reason chapter. Moreover, in the table of contents of the original edition (given in GW IX, 5–7) beside the continuous numbering of the main sections in Roman numerals from I to VIII, Hegel also gave a division in capital letters in the following form:

8 Hegel, *Briefe* v. I, no. 95, p. 161 f. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 80.

9 R. Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit*—Hegel and his time, Berlin 1857.

10 Th. Haering, *Die Entstehungsgeschichte der Phänomenologie des Geistes*—How the Phenomenology of Spirit came about, in: B. Wigersma ed., *Verhandlungen des dritten Hegelkongresses vom 19. bis 23. April 1933 in Rom*—Proceedings of the third Hegel congress from 19 to 23 April 1933 in Rome, Tübingen and Haarlem 1934, pp. 118–138.

(A) Consciousness	[I–III]
(B) Self-consciousness	[IV]
(C) (AA) Reason	[V]
(BB) Spirit	[VI]
(CC) Religion	[VII]
(DD) Absolute Knowing	[VIII]

—a remarkable subdivision because it suggests that spirit, religion and absolute knowing are species of reason, although in the Roman numeration they look very different, standing beside reason in their own right. The following remarks may throw some light on, if they do not completely answer this question of the organisation of the work.

a) It is certainly correct that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* did not in every respect issue from a single cast. Still one cannot say that the fundamental programme, namely developing the various possible forms of the way consciousness understands itself and its world from out of each other anywhere suffers a decisive break, much less one interrupting the programme altogether. It is safe to say that when he began writing the book Hegel probably assumed that he could keep his science of “becoming knowledge” much shorter than it actually turned out to be. But the real caesurae in the whole work are not to be found in the external circumstances of its production, but instead come down to changes in the assessment of the relative importance of the material itself. The most important of these caesurae is the transition from the first triad, consciousness—self-consciousness—reason, oriented more to the *individual subject*, to the second triad spirit—religion—absolute knowing, grounded rather in *objective* relations. It is thus the shift that precisely expresses Hegel’s own progress beyond the fundamental principle of subjective idealism to the *philosophy of spirit*, by which Hegel distinguishes himself from Kant, Jacobi, Fichte and also Schelling, and which finally gives the phenomenological viewpoints required for the analysis of becoming knowledge.

b) In this connection another aspect should be mentioned which relates to the fact that the patterns of consciousness analysed by Hegel reveal, sometimes more, sometimes less, historical references and can even be read partially as ‘encodings’ of specific historical or contemporary theories or even of whole epochs. Thus the section on “stoicism” in the chapter on self-consciousness relates to what is initially an ancient form of philosophy, but which as a type is not confined to the ancient world. The section on physiognomy and phrenology (craniology) relates to the theories of Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801) and Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828), both of whom were prominent just about one generation prior to the appearance of the *Phenomenology*. “Culture

and its realm of actuality”, in which the dualism of an attitude that flees from the “actual world” is developed, clearly reflects medieval structures. Finally, in the “spiritual artwork”, principally referring to tragedy, we are taken back to the world of the ancient Greeks, this time in the chapter on religion. Since there is no strictly chronological ordering throughout the work, interpreters have questioned how the alternation between historical and contemporary references is to be understood. Georg Lukács proposed a solution in his book *The Young Hegel*.<sup>11</sup> Lukács distinguishes three cycles which can be related *mutatis mutandis* to Hegel’s later distinction between subjective, objective and absolute spirit. The first cycle runs from consciousness up to reason and deals with what could be called a phenomenology of clearly subjective spirit, of the individual consciousness. In this cycle real historical references play a very small role for the simple reason that history as such is a reality of supra-individual, objective spirit. This world of objective spirit then, with a consciousness which as a whole is outside itself, emerges in the Spirit chapter, which, beginning with the substantial ethical order of the Greeks passes through the conditions of Roman law and the Christian medieval period all the way up to the Enlightenment, to the French revolution (analysed in the section “Absolute freedom and the Terror”) and finally into the so-called age of genius in Germany, which means into Hegel’s lifetime. Religion is the central focus and foundation of the third cycle. It begins again in historically distant times with the natural religions and leads via the already more concrete religious conditions of the Greeks into Christianity, the absolute religion, which is then followed by absolute knowing, that is by philosophy as a form of mindful spirit in which science becomes the self-comprehension of the self and spirited mind itself is no longer any kind of external condition and structure, but as conceptually comprehending and comprehended mind has become “existing immediacy”, living self-conscious cognition here and now. On the basis of this schema Lukács can say correctly that the historical references do not happen coincidentally, but that they form more or less consistent developments in their distinct contexts—nevertheless it is important to note here that this does not mean that it was Hegel’s intention somehow to reconstruct the entire history of the world as completely as possible in the *Phenomenology*. The references Hegel gives as a rule have more or less the character of ideal types and so the question cannot be why Hegel gives this or that example while leaving out other examples or reference points, but only whether the material presented really does bring out the specific pattern of spirited mind in question in its exemplary form, again not for

11 G. Lukács, *The Young Hegel—Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*, English translation by Rodney Livingstone, London 1975, p. 466 ff.

its own sake, but in order to reveal its own logic. Richard Kroner was also right when he said that if the *Phenomenology* was “dedicated to delineating the path of world history”, then it could “hardly be called a success”.<sup>12</sup> That is not what the *Phenomenology* is about. As we know, it is dedicated to finding the pathway of knowledge to itself, to the self-clarification of cognition as it finds its way from out of its multifarious possible external involvements back to itself and organises itself into a self-sustaining knowing.

4. One final remark. As we said above, with the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel created a whole new type of procedure for handling philosophical problems. This is not a theoretical treatise in the sense of a monological treatment of a rigidly defined theme, which has been the most important form of philosophical text from Aristotle's *pragmateia* all the way up to Kant's critiques. Instead we have concepts and intuitions, we have descriptions of real developments of conceptually analysed matters of interest. This text seeks above all to avoid maintaining a theoretical distance, but to involve the reader, or, as one can also say, it reveals reason, but here in history, that is in *bound* forms which are not of a purely rational nature; it offers descriptions of what can be called differently “embodied” thinking. The whole point of the phenomenological method is precisely to bring out the rationality lying in forms of reason bound in different ways in order to bring reason to itself, to awaken the knowledge of reason there where it is sleeping. This is why the *Phenomenology* demands of readers a constant shifting of perspectives. It draws them on from one pattern of consciousness under investigation to the next only to bring them back to their own perspectives at that point in the investigation. Doing this at the stage of the synopsis that has emerged from the development of the whole gives them the option of updating their own overviews. This continuous variation of stand-points is not arbitrary, it is fundamentally dialectical. Dialectical in the sense that the concepts we encounter, as well as those we bring to the investigation, are to be kept flexible and plastic in order to render them genetically comprehensible, that is to be grasped from their specific context of use. Thus, in the mighty struggle between the Enlightenment and faith which Hegel describes in the Spirit chapter and in which it always seems to be about a strict either/or, in fact it is vital that we grasp the logical rights of *both* sides so that we can move towards a kind of antinomy itself demanding a new pattern of consciousness, which for its part does not consist in indifference to the two, but gives expression to a qualitatively new kind of certainty. Hegel assumes that in the conflict between one reason and another reason, reason can only win;

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12 R. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel—From Kant to Hegel*, Tübingen 1973, vol. II, p. 375.

in order that it comes to that at all there must first be a conflict and attitudes have to become flexible. The point of the *Phenomenology* is then not simply to enjoy a review of all the things that men are capable of or of what they have actually been capable in the past, but rather to take us into the unfinished history of reason and into that anticipation of totality which lies within reason. It is important to emphasise this because in current discussions we occasionally get the impression that there is not much more to historical forms of reason or the history of philosophy as such than interchangeable objects of merely subjective interest. If Hegel shows us reason in the *Phenomenology* bound in immediate manifestations and objective in historical or other terms, he is not merely expressing his opinion. In each emerging form of reason there lies a questioning of our immediate certainties that has to be taken seriously and has to be answered; only then does the immediate certainty, what is apparently self-evident, get the chance to develop its status in the direction of a knowledge of itself that is certain in its own right. Briefly stated then, Hegel is no doubt the philosopher of the historical nature of reason, but not the founder of a historical relativism and certainly not of historicism. He rejects the claim that particular isolated standpoints, even if plausible to themselves, can claim to be the measure of all things, defending instead the measure, the standard that reason carries within itself when it asserts itself effectively against the particular standpoints. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* develops then an inner teleology and not everything in it is of equal value. But this teleology is experienced and grasped only by those who do not hold the view that there is no need to enter into the argument with other positions and who are ready to open their minds to the dialectic of finite forms of knowledge, their own immediate knowledge included.

## 2 *Preface and Introduction*

With that final introductory remark we come to the topic with which Hegel opens the *Preface* to his work of 1807. He takes up the usual expectation of the reading public with regard to a preface that this should contain details of the “goals” or of “the drift of the argument”, as one might say, of the “thesis” of the work. Prefaces should be an abbreviation of the full text of the book, something like an announcement ad and if the reader has a different opinion, it can save him from going to the trouble of reading the whole thing while giving him pointers for the “conversation” on the book (GW IX, 9; Miller ¶ 1). Hegel rejects such unphilosophical expectations of a philosophical work—because, generally speaking, a really philosophical book does not represent one *standpoint*,

but a *development of thinking*, a movement through *distinct* standpoints and may not relieve anyone of the task of executing this movement themselves with a few anticipatory references to the beginning and the end of it. Hegel gives right at the start two arguments demonstrating the impossibility of putting the reader on the royal road to philosophy in a preface. First, philosophy as a science does not contain a universal that can be considered separate from its particularisations, from its concrete contents; philosophy is not to be reduced to catchphrases like, in the case of Hegel's philosophy, "idealism" or "dialectical monism", for it can only be known from the determinate contents it addresses and by grasping its manner of representing itself in those contents, which have to be worked through themselves. For Hegel it is just as wrong to take the general standpoint of a philosophy as a basis for making judgments about it as it is to believe that one has the standard measure for true and false already to hand. Popular opinion only asks whether it itself is confirmed or rejected by a given philosophy, or it sees only the opposition to or agreement with a trusted view; it never occurs to it that such a trusted view can appear in a different light through that philosophy, that the different standpoints can themselves enter into a process of mutual displacement and thereby grow together into a higher whole. Opinion remains, as it were, confined to the political friend-or-foe schema, insisting on its identity and regarding whatever does not conform to that view as already refuted. Just as the bud of a plant is something other than the bloom, the fruit again something other than that flower, the three, as Hegel says, "do not conflict with each other, but each is as necessary as the other" (GW IX, 10; Miller ¶ 2),<sup>13</sup> just so is it in philosophy. The job is not done by fixing differences, instead it is about discovering the productive power of difference, something which again is not achieved by commonplaces, but which can only be had by concretely working out a given philosophy. Hegel continues in the same vane:

[T]he refutation of a philosophical system tends generally not to comprehend itself in this manner, just as the receiving consciousness [or reading consciousness, as we have called it] tends not to be able to free the refutation from its one-sidedness, much less to maintain that freedom, that is to penetrate the appearance of conflict and mutual incompatibility and recognise the two—the system and its refutation—as mutually necessary moments. (ibid.)

13 A similar image is found in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* I, TW 18, 40 f.; Haldane and Simson vol. 1 p. 22, article on the "Notion of Development" in the Introduction, vol. 1, A.2.a.¶ 4.

To that end it is vital actually to know the philosophy in question not only as a name, a label, a catchword, but in its “presentation”, in its unfolding and differentiation and realisation to its own internal complete determination. Precisely in philosophy terminology, mere nomenclature, is fatal. What is called for is rather the *concrete universal* of the *system* that does not simply cue up prompts and buzzwords but creates connections, which does rely on immediate assertions but is capable of reflecting upon its assertions and relating them to other positions. Hegel says on this point:

Truth's own scientific system is the true form in which alone it can exist. Helping to bring philosophy closer to the form of science—to put aside its name ‘*love of knowing*’ and become *actual knowing*—this is the task I have set myself. The nature of knowledge contains the inner necessity that it be science and only philosophy's demonstration of that necessity and that science can provide a satisfactory explanation of this. (GW IX, 11; Miller ¶ 5)

We recall what Hegel wrote from Jena in 1805 in his letter to Voß in Heidelberg, that “for Germany” the time has come “for the truth to become manifest” and the “general constellation of the age” is favourable to this “hope”.<sup>14</sup> Similar sentiments are found here in the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology* where Hegel writes that “the time is ripe for philosophy to raise itself to the level of science” (ibid.), and proving this is philosophy's justification, indeed it is the performance of this elevation itself. Hegel goes on to say that his “is a time of birth and transition to a new period”, one of gradual decay; but watch out because “lightning strikes and there it is: a new world is born!” (GW IX, 14; Miller ¶ 11). He also sees himself standing *against* the time or at least against his leading contemporaries who set the tone; namely with his demand that the rebirth of philosophy must happen in the concept, not in feeling or intuition. Hegel knows that his time, the time of philosophers like Jacobi and Novalis, of Schleiermacher und Schlegel, clamours for “edification” not “insight”, “feeling” not “knowledge”, “ecstasy” not “the concept” and “bubbling enthusiasm” not “the cold march of necessity in the matter itself” (GW IX, 13; Miller ¶ 7). He counters with the simple statement, “Philosophy must resist the urge to edify”—its duty is rather to deliver determination, the *horos*, and the necessity of its development (GW IX, 14; Miller ¶ 9). Philosophy has no quick solutions, no effortless satisfactions, and even if it is true that every individual is a philosopher, this does not mean that philosophy could relieve anyone determined to

14 Hegel, *Briefe* v. 1, no. 55, p. 100. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 106.

become what he may well inherently be of the “labour of the concept” (GW IX, 41; Miller ¶ 70). This is especially true in times of upheaval or of “restructuring” (GW IX, 14; Miller ¶ 11), for in such times only a start is made, philosophy cannot be “completely determined” (GW IX, 15; Miller ¶ 13), because it has not had time to find for itself its extension in a system. At first it exists only as one detail beside others. The Copernican system, which has become the common possession of mankind over the last three centuries and more, was at the hour of its birth and for almost a whole century after confined to a few individuals regarded by their contemporaries as at best rather eccentric. Hegel believes that something similar happened with the advent of the new philosophy—the philosophy that will go on to grasp itself consistently as the knowledge of self-sustaining knowing. It could not have simply been there at a stroke, much less become “universal property” instantaneously. All the more dangerous is it then, when philosophy tries to get ahead of itself and its development with rapid fire formulas. It is in the context of such warnings that we encounter the first critical sideswipes by Hegel (without mentioning names) against his long-time friend Schelling. For instance when he says in obvious reference to Schelling’s philosophy of identity:

... the knowing subject rides roughshod over everything it comes across with its single unmoved form, submerging everything in this inert element from outside. This approach is hardly better than passing fancies about the content. What is required is the self-generating wealth of forms in self-determined variations. (GW IX, 17; Miller ¶ 15)

Self-determining difference—difference understood as mediation, as a *genetic* principle—this is how Hegel understands his own approach. Formalism, especially in the specialised disciplines and sciences, that takes contents fixed elsewhere, ready-made as it were, and subjects them to the constantly identical form of the knowing subject—this is how Hegel sees Schelling’s approach, whose absolute he now declares to be nothing other than the “night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black” (ibid.). Schelling took this broad hint and held it against Hegel ever after. But then Schelling did not pursue the philosophy of identity any further and remained more or less silent for many years.

After assessing his times and distancing himself from Schelling, Hegel gives an important indication of his own concept of philosophy, of what he sees as the principle of his philosophy.

In my view, which can only be vindicated by the demonstration of the system, everything depends upon grasping and stating the insight that truth is not only *substance* but just as much *subject*. (GW IX, 18; Miller ¶ 17)

This statement is for Hegel of the most fundamental importance and we have to examine it closely in order really to understand it. We recall the formula introduced above with which Hegel complements Kant's axiom—that the conditions of the possibility of experience are simultaneously conditions of possibility of the objects of experience<sup>15</sup>—with his converse axiom that the conditions of possibility of the objects of experience are equally conditions of possibility of the experience of these objects. This formula shows us how to interpret Hegel's *principle of the simultaneity of the substantiality and subjectivity* of truth. The first thing to emphasise is the *simultaneity* of the two sides. Hegel does *not* say that the truth is not at all substantial, but rather subjective—that would be Fichte's position, but not Hegel's. He says expressly that we have to grasp “the truth not [merely] as substance, but just as much as subject”. In a review written by Hegel much later in Berlin in 1829 of the work *Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen*—Aphorisms on ignorance and absolute knowing, by Karl Friedrich Göschel (1784–1862), a lawyer and Hegelian, we find it once again this time more clearly formulated “that the absolute substance is just as much subject and that the absolute subject is just as much substance” (TW 11, 368). The two sides are thus *on the one hand* clearly distinct, for being is not simply knowledge, content not simply form, object not simply subject. Parmenides long ago said that thinking and being are the same—τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν τε καὶ εἶναι (*to gar auto noein te kai einai*)<sup>16</sup>—and with that he had, like Hegel, “true” being in mind. Indeed the concept of truth works well to gain a first approach to Hegel's “Parmenidean” base position; for truth is only there where behind a fact or knowledge there does not lie another being that might be completely other than what the “fact” or the “knowledge” says. When we say of something “that is *true*!”, with that we also say “it *is* so!” The concept of truth thus contains the subjective knowing and the objective being as its two extremes into which, as it were, it articulates itself. But now we also know that for Hegel neither of the two extremes, neither being or substance nor knowing or the subjective, remain independently constant; both are variables; in their determination they are both functions of the logical and truth-theoretical total relation. The total relation is the totality, the whole, of which substance and subject are only moments; as moments of the whole they are disjunct with respect to each other, the one is the negation of the other and precisely in that they are also determined by each other, the significance of the one side cannot be understood in isolation from the other. The orientation outwards of the substantial relation contains within it already the possibility of subjective reflection-into-itself, just as the true unfolding of the latter

15 See fn. 9 in ch. 2.2, p. 37 above.

16 Parmenides, Fragment B 3, Diels-Kranz.

is simultaneously the restoration of being. At first at least the *Phenomenology* has to put the accent on the bound forms of knowing so that in its subjectivity it can be worked out from initial substantial, intuitive, imaging or representational knowledge and all its presuppositions. Consciousness has to be led in the direction of not simply finding itself present in a given world, of not simply “having” that world, but of recognising itself as the light source, as the *sun-glade* and grounding of this world, i.e. as the subjective representation of the true—of the relation as a whole. What consciousness immediately addresses as being, as substance, as irreducible objectivity of the world, is for Hegel nothing other than the “immediacy of knowledge”, it is the knowing or the truth itself set, fixed as given. The knowledge of being is always also given, existing knowledge, so to know substance means that substance presents itself also as knowing. This is why Hegel says that substance—the objective, the bound or what exists individually—is a “being . . . that is only truly actual insofar as it [substance] is the motion of autonomous self-assertion, mediating its own process of becoming something other with itself” (GW IX, 18; Miller ¶ 18). This not only once again emphasises that philosophical knowing can only be systematic, it makes clear that it cannot consist of just slogans or *aperçus*. It also says that systematic unfolding of something immediate, of a “matter” according to its inner necessity is simultaneously the liberation of this matter into its condition of being known. The lines of necessity on which a matter develops and finds relations to others are simultaneously the lines on which it articulates its self, relating itself to itself and finding its identity, recognising itself therein, and in all that also becoming for us knowable. For Hegel there is no abstract identity of things in themselves with themselves, but only the identity in relation to others, only what one can call a *dialectical relational identity* in which selfness and otherness both, like subjectivity and substantiality, lie within each other. Hegel puts it thus, “it [i.e. living substance unfolding itself as knowing] is as subject pure *integral negativity*” (ibid.)—basically then *identity is relation to itself*. Substance thus has an ideal centre, a midpoint, in which its unity can be said to be symbolised, remaining however only an extensionless and symbolic unity, unless it is understood as a principle of motion, of repulsion against the positive or extended aspect of substance. This is why Hegel says that the ideal unity of substance, its integral negativity, is at the same time the “splitting of the integral” (ibid.); it is the principle of its presentation as that of a relation, of something extended and in that also of substantial being. The *identity* of substance is a *differentiated unity*, which *in itself* entails a contradiction, but this only really says that the identity of substance is a process, a “polar doubling” (ibid.) in which the *identity of the matter* re-establishes itself

in passing through differentiation. Hegel emphasises that only “this self-regenerating equality or the reflection within otherness into itself... is the truth” (ibid.).

The claim made here is of the greatest significance for Hegel’s initiative as a whole, but to regard it as a formula would be a gross misunderstanding. It contains the principle of concrete thinking, so it can only be understood by thinking it through concretely, i.e. working with it philosophically through concrete contents. Still, this does not preclude giving one or two preliminary examples. Take for example language, which we spoke of above in the section on the first of the Jena system drafts. Language there was for Hegel nature purely relating to itself, nature in its essence. As immediate sound articulation language is, as it were, the external aspect of nature immediately appearing only just as immediately to vanish. So the linguistic expression is an immediate mental construct, which, one could say, appears as substance, i.e. as merely immediate and appearing knowledge, that can be initially found and taken up by a subject. Language *is* in a certain sense the existence of consciousness, of subjectivity. What then precisely is the unity of a linguistic expression, what is its ‘subjectivity’? The answer is its *meaning*, which is initially a completely ideal construct, a thought, the other and inner of the appearing expression, i.e. language only *reflected into itself*, ‘negative language’; Augustine would here have spoken of the *verbum internum*. But then a linguistic expression only has real meaning to the extent that it can be mediated with other expressions, that it can be ‘used’ in the exchange of expressions, revealing its contents in this to and fro. All language usage is interpretation of ideal moments of meaning, rendering a negative inside outwardly positive and only thereby becoming capable of truth. Through “the reflection within otherness” and out the other side, as Hegel says, it shows itself to be a form of a unity that is just as substantial (immediate knowing) as it is subjective (posited knowing).

Another example we have already gotten to know and which one could cite here is the concept of the I. The ideal unity of this concept is pure subjectivity, at first only given as simple negativity, an extensionless point and focus of identity. But then a real person is only an I to the extent that he can represent its (i.e. his) identity as an active process of setting himself in relation to other things and to other people; he is not an I in autistic isolation, but in positive articulation, in the life of his I, clarifying his self-identity as a process-unity of self-regenerating identity. Identity does not persist as narcissistic self-importance, but only by exposing itself to its other, to that which it is not, to its difference. For Hegel this holds of all merely formal identifications, including those of formal logic, which as abstractions lacking the mediation with their

content are 'untrue'. This is the context in which we have to understand the well-known assertion of Hegel's that "the truth is the whole" and not forgetting the following qualifying statement, "The whole, however, is essence perfecting itself through its own development. The absolute is essentially result; only in the end does it exist in its truth; and herein lies its nature of being actual and subject: becoming itself." (GW IX, 19; Miller ¶ 20). Every statement, every simple formulation of something immediate contains a movement going beyond itself, its own "becoming other". This motion of becoming something other is the form in which it shows itself to be actually real, revealing its own rationality to be teleological or showing that its immediacy is in fact its potential for mediation. This is of decisive importance for Hegel's concept of the concept. For Hegel, the concept is not a merely ideal unity or a degree of abstraction, but the potential for mediating itself with its other. This other of the concept is on the one hand the other concept and on the other hand the non-conceptual as such; the automotion of the concept is open to both, with respect to both it elevates itself above the mere immediacy or substantiality of knowledge in order to become posited knowledge. Since actuality is itself nothing other than the process of the concept arriving at itself, realising itself, Hegel expresses it in terms that anticipate the end of the *Phenomenology*.

Only what is endowed with spirit is *actually real*; it is the essence or *being-in-itself*—self-relating and determinate, *being-other* and *being-for-itself*—and remaining in itself within this determination or its own being-outside-itself—in short it is *in-and-for-itself*. (GW IX, 22; Miller ¶ 25)

In the *Phenomenology* consciousness must first orient itself to this being-in-and-for-itself, this absolute actuality; it must first generate itself. Obviously, spirit here cannot simply mean the abstraction of the mental, of the inner, of what is merely thought etc. Spirit is the relation of truth in which all things stand as things and are known as such. Spirit is essentially not merely subjective; it lies beyond the distinction between subjective and objective.

Hegel then goes on to explain the programme of the *Phenomenology* as elevating the individual up to the standpoint of "pure self-knowing", the standpoint of spirit and science. The individual has the right to demand of science that it provide him with a "ladder" up to the scientific standpoint, indeed that it reveal the scientific viewpoint "within him", within the individual himself. Hegel here makes the important observation that the individual "knows he possesses" an "absolute autonomy... in every form of his knowledge" (GW IX, 23; Miller ¶ 26). The individual is, even if still "uneducated" (GW IX, 24; Miller ¶ 28), a knowing being as such, a being endowed

with reason knowing that it possesses an absolute right to its knowledge, to its immediate certainty and no external claims can in any way restrict that right. Nevertheless, the individual's immediate knowledge must be replaced by scientific knowledge or self-conscious spirit—what Hegel calls “the universal individual”. Universalising the individual starts with the individual opening up to what is *other* than its *own* standpoint, which means leaving “natural” or “immediate” consciousness behind. In contrast to spirit as the universal individual, the single individual is “incomplete spirit, a concrete structure whose whole existence is dominated by one particular feature in high definition with the others only present in blurred outlines” (GW IX, 24; Miller ¶ 28). Universal spirit, in contrast, accumulates the knowledge of all, including that of previous generations, within it. Hegel speaks of the “incredible work of world history” (GW IX, 25; ¶ 29), by which what previously occupied whole epochs and their concentrated application could become an “abbreviation” to “simple terms of thought”, which means that later generations have taken it as “recollected essence” and given it being-for-itself, an autonomous existence. This is the sense in which the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is also a grandiose *anamnesis* of the human spirit and this recollection structure of the whole gives us a clue to understanding the architectonic of the work.

The goal of this anamnesis, this recollection is not simply to bring about free and self-conscious, self-sustaining philosophical knowledge, but also to elucidate it in its specific relations to the forms of knowledge as they appear in that recollection process. For the telos of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely philosophical knowledge, of which we already know that it is in every respect self-determining reflexive knowledge, knowledge that has freed itself from the opposition of consciousness, should not simply stand there beside and unrelated to all the other forms of knowledge and of modes of having a world. Philosophical knowledge is the determinate negation and overcoming of those other forms of knowing and only when this can be demonstrated, only when philosophy can methodically relate to and clearly distinguish itself from non-philosophical knowledge does the *Phenomenology* fulfil its purpose of leading to philosophical knowledge as something that is not an arbitrary alternative to the knowledge of natural consciousness. For Hegel then the most important difference between philosophy and all other forms of knowledge, including all other forms of scientific knowledge, is that the others all make assumptions and, indeed, that they can only think in the framework of their assumptions—assumptions about form as well as about content. These assumptions crucially determine the modes of relating to their subject matter and, indeed, to the world as such within the given form of knowledge, both setting the limits of their horizons and supplying their inner logic. Non-philosophical

knowledge is, to use an expression that goes back to Plato, always a knowledge “*ex hypothesi*”, i.e. knowledge under previously made assumptions, and while philosophical knowledge does not *begin* without assumptions, it must seek systematically to *overcome* and integrate those assumptions into itself. Plato called philosophical knowledge that overcomes the assumptions as such pure thinking (νοεῖν, *noein*); methodologically he called it “dialectic”. It was clear to him that pure thinking is only possible dialectically, which means that assumptions normally made have to be set in relation to one another. This is precisely what Hegel undertakes in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* when he attempts to mediate the various forms of possible consciousness with each other, which means letting them emerge from out of each other and in the end to reach something that is more than merely another form of consciousness, namely purely self-referential, absolute knowledge. On this path, as we have said, initially the unreflected forms of the making of assumptions are worked through—and indeed with everything that attaches to them. The ontology, for instance, that someone has and defends, his implicit or explicit conception of what deserves to be called “being” or what is “true” as well as conversely what *is not* or what has to be seen as inessential, depends immediately on the basic position of his consciousness with respect to the world. The different standpoints, the series of which we work through in the *Phenomenology*, could be said to be just as many ontologies, just as many refractions of the relations between I and world. Within such a framework it is then not so important what that someone can communicate, but rather exactly how the values are assigned by this basic position itself. In this sense, we can give the following ground rule for Hegel’s phenomenological procedure. All determinate, well-defined knowledge depends on value assignments which are unquestioningly assumed and constitute an unexpressed axiology, for which there are basically three possibilities.<sup>17</sup> The *object* option assumes that the source of truth for a fact or piece of knowledge, and with that also of the form of knowledge itself, lies with the *object*. The *subject* option assumes that this ground of truth is to be found in the *subject*. Finally, the *relation* option in one way or another assumes that the truth lies in the *relation* between the consciousness and its object. These three possibilities are already to be found in the first triad of phenomenological basic forms, namely the series: consciousness—self-consciousness—reason. Consciousness itself sets the ground of truth and all truth in the object; it understands itself as accidental to the world and the world itself as something that would still be there even if it were not there for

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17 The three possibilities here correspond to the three syllogisms Hegel gives at the end of the *Encyclopaedia*, see ch. 13.1 *Three Syllogisms*, pp. 379–382 below.

a consciousness; in this axiology the world has a greater value than consciousness. Self-consciousness emerges from a fundamental reversal of this relation; it knows itself to be the “truth,” it is the measure and the norm of objects, it measures the value of the external world solely against itself and is thus not really theoretical, but highly practical. In self-consciousness *self-certainty* outweighs the *certainty of the objects* and the object that counters this self-certainty is marked with a negative sign and slated for elimination. This, by the way, is a standpoint of which Hegel in the section on “sense certainty” casually remarks that “the animals” are not “excluded” from it, since they in no sense regard external objects as truly actual; “they do not stop,” as Hegel expresses it, “in awe of sensuous objects as if they possessed intrinsic being; rather, despairing of this reality and fully certain of its nullity they grab what they can and gobble it up.” (GW IX, 69; Miller ¶ 109). The axiology grounding the ontology of the animals thus sets the self higher than external existence, which is then not gingerly approached maintaining a theoretical distance, but is directly appropriated and set as a moment of the self. The third position is then that of reason or the immediate certainty that external and internal reality are the same; it sets certainty and truth equal, subject and substance too and is thus the knowledge that I and world are equally essential, indeed that they are *the same logical essence*. This position first appears as idealism and, as we shall see, despite the immediacy of its own certainty of itself, this idealism is very far from being completely clear about itself; nevertheless, it is *in itself* the goal of the whole movement to which the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is directed.

We adopted above Lukács’ three cycles for the architecture of the *Phenomenology*. In the first cycle the emphasis is on subjective spirit grounded in consciousness in the narrower sense and it runs from consciousness through self-consciousness to reason; the second focuses more on objective spirit grounded in spirit itself; and the third, absolute cycle encompasses religion and absolute knowing. Now we can say that the displacement of the source of truth from object to subject and then to their relation structuring the first cycle recurs analogously in both the other cycles. Spirit begins in the sphere of what Hegel elsewhere calls “substantial ethical life,” in the realm of objectively valid ethos, which he illustrates by reference to the world of the ancient Greeks, from out of which in a tragic process, as Hegel shows, subjectivity first emerges and reaches self-consciousness. The next level of spirit, that of mind alienated from itself, already presupposes self-conscious subjectivity, but in its alienation it feels itself to be in opposition to an objective world, which must first accommodate itself to this self-conscious subjectivity, i.e. subjectivity seeks to acquire the world. The illustrations here derive from the cultural world of Christianity from the end of the ancient world up to the French

revolution. The third level of this middle cycle is then that of “spirit certain of itself”, which, like reason, is at home in its world. This spirit presupposes the equilibrium of selfhood and otherness and in that once again affirms the simultaneity of subjectivity and substantiality. But it has not quite grasped the ultimate ground, the final reason why it is capable of doing this, so it anticipates absolute knowing “objectively” or only *in itself* rather than already having developed it out of itself. Religion is the first stage of the final cycle and once again the beginning is totally objective and lost in the matter. Religious consciousness finds on the level of *nature religion* in light, in plants and animals and finally in the creation itself instances of absolute, comprehensive truth which it only desires to serve. In *art religion*, in contrast, consciousness itself becomes creative producing absolute truth as the work of art or in religious rituals, but it is only on the level of *revealed religion* that absolute truth has become a being-in-and-for-itself. It is now object and immediately revealed as this object, it is *God*, a God who communicates and is immediately with us. For this God human consciousness is not external to him, for he opens up a consciousness of God that is itself divine consciousness—this is for Hegel the real content of the basic principle of Christianity, that God became man. This God is not some kind of extramundane “highest being” only existing *in itself*, only substance, but one who has revealed himself in the form of subjectivity and for the subject. Absolute knowing is then nothing other than the scientific unfolding of this revelation or spiritual presence that is free of oppositions, it is the unfolding of the self as that of being and just as much that of the concept of this being, and in all this it is the immediate consummated act of knowing as a unity of knowing in- and for-itself.

In all three cycles we thus encounter an analogous re-evaluation in the respective relation to the world and together with that a consequent reorientation of the dominant ontology. At the end of each cycle stands the respective form of fulfilment of the principle of simultaneity from the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology*, of that principle then which says “the truth” is “to be grasped and expressed . . . not only as substance but just as much as subject”. This principle places the truth firmly in the determinate relation between substance and subject and, as we have seen, does not regard these terms, substance and subject, as absolute, but as variables of the relation of knowing. Moreover, its concrete confirmation lies in its execution in the material of the given form of knowledge under investigation, that is in the methodological principle of the overcoming of the assumptions made in each case on the side of substance or of subject. This is the principle which in the manner demonstrated above structures Hegel’s whole work. Absolute knowing, the result, makes no more assumptions, instead it clarifies assumptions; it no longer relates to

something other, something alien to it and unmediated by it, but only sets itself in relation to itself. As such it no longer knows the difference between essence or *in-itself* and appearance or *for-me* and so it leaves the ground of merely appearing, unmediated, existing knowledge behind.

To complete our introductory account of the total structure of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we have to return to the *Preface* once again. There are still some important points we have to bring out in that text, important for the understanding of the work as a whole. The principle of the “motion” of the concepts or of “rendering them fluid” is one that is fundamental to Hegel’s philosophy. We have in fact already discussed this above when we talked about perspective shift and displacements in the dominant axiologies and ontologies. As the *Phenomenology* runs through the various perspectives, the moves between them entail changes in assignments of truth values clearly making it impossible to maintain identical concepts throughout. The whole development through the *Phenomenology* could not function without a dynamic semantics, so it is impossible to determine the significance of any thematic concept independent of the general framework and determining factors constituting any given pattern of consciousness or, as it were, to freeze it in a semantic refrigerator. The word ‘being’, for instance, means for sense certainty, which regards everything given to the senses as existing, something completely different than it does for a systematic natural science, for which true being consists in “eternal laws” not in ephemeral appearances. It means something different again for the self-consciousness which under ‘being’ understands its own self-realisation, its own practice that negates what is external to it. For reason, as indeed also for absolute knowing, both of which after their own fashion understand being as mediating totality, as the presence of the logical unity of subject and object, it is quite different again. Similarly, for the standpoint of theoretical science, as Hegel will explicate it in the third chapter on “Force and Understanding”, the term ‘individuality’ means something distinct from what it does say for the representatives of the “animal kingdom of the spirit”, let us say for an artist or writer all too conscious of his genius. In the former it counts as the last trace of irrationality which must be methodically eliminated, while for the latter it is the purpose and the whole meaning of human existence as such. This is why the search for truth in disciplined scientific research, which according to its own view of itself is fully dedicated to the matter itself, and the proclamation of the truth of “individuality”, which, as Hegel says “is *in-and-for-itself* real to itself” (GW IX, 214; Miller, p. 236), have so little to do with each other. Hegel’s view is that each standpoint, or better, the *concept* that each standpoint represents, fills and defines anew all its concepts from this foundational

concept and self-understanding and this is the sense in which all the concepts are brought into motion. It is interesting to note that the notion of concepts in motion did not originate with Hegel's phenomenological initiative, but in a general methodological sense it starts with Plato, more precisely in Plato's late philosophy, in which the ideas are no longer regarded merely as hypotheses and guarantors of identity, but are regarded as developing from out of each other. We tend to regard Plato's ideas as imperturbable, at rest in themselves, but among themselves they actually stand in dynamic and living relations of mutual determination. Plato's masterpiece dialogue *Parmenides*, which Hegel rated very highly, leads us into a dense scenario of constellation shifts among the highest concepts, in which all structures are broken down leaving the reader at the end unclear as to what exactly he should rely on in order to get his thoughts into some kind of reliable order.

The situation in Hegel's work is not quite so dramatic and in the *Phenomenology* the reader is always saved from falling into complete confusion and incomprehension by at least semi-intuitive material for the respective constellations of consciousness illustrating the revaluation of their leading concepts. It is nevertheless clear to Hegel that his programme of concepts in motion makes initially at least what appears to be a very counter-intuitive demand. Concept-identities are always loaded with the investments of ego-identities and this is why Hegel's programme seems initially so obscure. The requirement of regarding the concepts in which and thanks to which the subject understanding the concepts has an identical world, indeed thanks to which it is itself an autonomous subject at all, as in motion, as 'transiting' into other concepts, has to be regarded by that subject as an attack on its own identity, unless, of course, it is already used to regarding them in that way as fluid. This is why conflicts on scientific questions or disputes over fundamental issues are conducted with what can at first sight seem quite irrational or even fierce commitment, although they are supposed to be "only concerned with the truth". Bickering over the correct use of words is familiar to us all and the terminological dispute is often an indication of the orientation, of the axiology, according to which subjects constitute their identities and on which for them their world and their understanding of it depends. No dispute on fundamental orientation, indeed, no scientific dispute at all is, as one could say with Hegel, only a matter of theoretical issues. It is always also a question of the viability of one's own self-consciousness, a "struggle for recognition", in which what is being fought over is not so much the truth as one's own competence to define what truth is. One can also say that the point at which the individual shows his teeth and his claws in such disputes is the most secure indication of his logical level, for precisely this is what is supposed to be 'saved'. Hegel says in the *Preface* that

it is so difficult “to render fixed thoughts fluid” because they “have the I, the power of the negative, or pure actuality for their substance and the element of their existence” (GW IX, 28; Miller ¶ 33). The I, the ‘*ego cogito*’, refuses to be replaced by anyone and herein lies its absolute right to understand the world as it understands it. For the common understanding the I and its certainty of itself grow together with the concrete form in which it understands the world; what then follows is the transference of the irreplaceability of the I in its understanding of the world onto an apparent irreplaceability of the specific concepts in which any I actually understands the world. Hegel explains at this point that it is not about depriving the I of self-certainty or of the consciousness that it itself is the knower; the I is not supposed to “leave itself” or “set itself aside”, but it should abandon “the fixity” of its “self-assertion” (ibid.). The I needs to comprehend itself as a moment, we can also say as a concrete function of its own concepts or of knowing; it should realise that it does not lose its identity in the necessary development, in the dialectic of its concepts, but in fact realises its identity in the sense that from every “re-evaluation” of the concepts in which it participates an even more concrete I emerges. Indeed, in this sense one can even say that the entire *Phenomenology* is an itinerary of the stages by which the I becomes ever more concrete, literally an *itinerarium mentis in suum esse*. Nothing is as abstract and empty as a consciousness that only has sense information in it; it is not only in categorial terms the poorest, one could even say the totally vegetative, form of the existence of knowledge, it is also the form of consciousness that is most easily mistaken. Conversely, nothing is as concrete as philosophical knowledge, for it produces its content as its own property and passes over into it—like the knowledge that commits itself wholly to the automotion and self-generation of the concept through its own differences and precisely in that becomes actual and capable of relations. We encounter this idea again and again in Hegel, the idea that wanting to assert oneself only as *subject*, only as logical form or, to take a phenomenological example, as a “beautiful soul”, in reality means excluding oneself from actuality and from the spirit. Of course this does not imply that Hegel recommends being something like a weather vane or adopting a cynical quietism. Such attitudes are examples of that abstract subjectivity declining to commit itself to contents, which appear to it as mere contingencies, while in reality striving after its own carefully calculated advantage; objectivity it regards as not “substantially” true, but just a game whose rules it adheres to pedantically. The motion of the concepts, on the other hand, is a serious matter. The main issue in it is the *necessity* of the progress from one concept to another, the inner, not only the outer, compulsion to abandon a specific conceptual identification and in overcoming it and passing over to its determinate other to recognise the same automotion

of knowledge at work which is the source of all identification, including one's own. In its course the *Phenomenology* seeks by means of the self-moving, auto-motive concept to survey the limits of all possible determinate consciousness; it seeks, as Hegel says, to "comprehend through the dynamism of the concept the complete worldliness of consciousness in its necessity" (GW IX, 29; Miller ¶ 33). This claim to "complete worldliness" means that every kind of understanding of the world and the self should find its place in this book, so there is initially no normative understanding of the world and the self, no *a priori* privileged form of consciousness, for the aim is to raise awareness, to become conscious as such, not only according to its form, but always as a specific patterning of knowledge, which entails becoming conscious of the indirect self-reference in knowledge. This patterning then takes a path on which what was always its hidden ground is revealed: self-relation as the fundamental existence of knowing.

Hegel's rejection of the demand that philosophy present its principles and its truth in short snappy sentences, in handy slogans is also important here. We have seen that Hegel rejects the view that the preface to a philosophical book is the place to give its position. The same thing applies in relation to the dogmatic mode of thinking, which is "nothing other than the view that the truth consists in a sentence, that it is a fixed result and even one that can be known immediately" (GW IX, 31; Miller ¶ 40). The truth, however, as Hegel, recalling Lessing, puts it, is never "a minted coin, a handy little item that enters into circulation and then can be simply pocketed" (GW IX, 30; Miller ¶ 30).<sup>18</sup> No sentences are abstractly true or abstractly false. This principle constitutes one of the main criteria of differentiation between dialectical and analytical thinking. Analytic thinking seeks to check sentences for their truth or falsity in terms of formal aspects, which always imply a specific ontology (and axiology), but for dialectical thinking, at first at least, *no* isolated sentence can be simply true or false. Truth and falsity are not immediate properties of sentences. The only way to make dialectical sense of such a claim would be to refer it to the potential of a sentence to be *related* to other sentences and thus capable of concrete development. Hegel calls truth "its own motion within itself" (GW IX, 35; Miller ¶ 48); it is the *result* of a process of (self-)understanding in which what is rejected, that from which insight recoiled, is not simply discarded but also contributes to the concretion which is the result. Truth is a function of, indeed it is the actuality of conceptual motion itself, not, of course, of any arbitrary sequence of images, but the genesis of the logical presence of one for the other, of the many for the one and of the one for the many. Truth is thus a systematic

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18 Cf. Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*, act III, scene 6 (verse 1868 f.).

recovery of difference into relation, the establishment of an integral relation of distinct determinations, so it is no simple identity of, for instance, thought and object, but rather the mediation into a unity which Hegel, who only in this sense can speak of a “life of truth” (ibid.), understands as concrete living vitality, as totality. This is emphasised in drawing the boundary with the notion of dead truths existing for themselves.

Truth is the bacchanalian whirl in which no reveller remains sober and simultaneously, since each's exit would be their instant demise, complete transparency and simple repose. In the opulent composition of that motion neither individual patterns of mindful spirit nor particular thoughts persist; they are every bit as necessary and positive as they are negative and transient moments. In the *whole* of this motion, grasped as rest, is preserved whatever distinguishes itself within it and finds particular existence by *recollecting* itself, for its existence is its knowledge of itself and immediately vice versa. (ibid.)

Truth is the transformation of the immediate into something mediated, a ‘translation’ of the simple position into a more complex, higher structure, on the one hand developing what is contained in it by maintaining itself in its relations to others, while on the other hand preserving what is contained in it as memory. This latter is the aspect of anamnesis in Hegel's phenomenological undertaking, transforming all immediate knowledge into a presence of spirited mind, turning it into an image that lets philosophical knowledge be recognised as spirit of its own spirit.

This process conception of truth has stimulated much interest in recent Hegel research, especially in America, but has also given rise to some misunderstandings. What is attractive in Hegel here is that he understands truth—how could it be otherwise—in very different terms than the traditional correspondence theory and hence seems to be open to more recent theories of truth. The dialectical angle of not binding truth to sentences or to their formal properties is not only accommodating to the hermeneutic concept of truth and other proposals for ‘pluralising’ truth, it also releases one from the obligation to look for a normative semantics and grammar for the ostensible ‘normal language’ against which in the analytical sense all statements about the world and about human beings should be measured. It is, however, a misunderstanding to believe that Hegel's process concept of truth could be understood pragmatically. The definition of truth coined by Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914), founder of American pragmatism, has achieved classic status. It states that “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we

mean by truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real".<sup>19</sup> Peirce's definition is considered the starting point of the consensus theory of truth, the notion that truth is the consensus among subjects and is the result of (qualified) acts of agreeing. Ascribing this position to Hegel, as sometimes happens, is a mistake not only because it amounts to giving his dialectic an empiricist turn, but even more because it would reduce it to subjectivism, which is completely inappropriate. It would mean regarding the matter exclusively from the subjective side and suppressing the simultaneous *objective* character of the motion of the concepts or of truth, which is so crucial to Hegel. He most certainly does not claim that, for instance, the laws of quantity can be changed by majority decision, i.e. consensually, even if he does claim that the standpoint of quantificational thinking is a relative one which from out of itself—i.e. by the motion of the concepts—forces us to find other ways of approaching it than just quantitative perspectives. Pragmatism and the consensus theory of truth presuppose that the subject pursuing the pragmatic goal remains autonomously identical in the pursuit of that goal, excluding the possibility that perhaps 'behind its back' the 'basic' concepts enter into dialectical motion. The latter is precisely Hegel's view and the process or the life of truth of which he speaks is not a process that could be set in motion by subjective accords, decisions or arrangements. For Hegel the truth is not up for negotiation, rather it *shows* itself to be a *categorical* result; certainly we participate in it—to the extent that is that we are the ones moved by the motion of the categories—but we do not 'make' it by intentional acts of conscious goal setting. The simultaneity of subject and substance, which is always expressed in truth, is precisely what makes it impossible that truth be *willed* and *forced*; it asserts itself. Subjective will is certainly one of its moments, but not its centre; the truth determines itself, integrating the process of subjective determination just as much as the objective variety, the contextual, factual determination, while remaining autonomous within that. Like all knowing—and truth is a function of cognition—truth is autonomous. It must be emphasised once again that it is perfectly correct to say of Hegel that he is one of the first philosophers to acknowledge the possibility of immediately many truths, of not a single, immediately normative truth, but the "one" as well as the "other" truth. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* we encounter indeed many truths in the sense that, in Hegel's language, every higher pattern of consciousness is the truth of its predecessor. However, that does not alter the fact that for Hegel there is a centre of truth, a vanishing point of the relative truths, a point in which the process

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19 Ch. S. Peirce, *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*, in his *Collected Papers*, ed. Ch. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, Cambridge, Mass., 1931 ff., vol. 5, 268 [5, 407].

of truth does indeed come to rest. This point is not simply one of agreement between subjects—these can retain as before their very different subjective views of truth—but of agreement between knowing and known, the point of the *self of knowledge*, which is the only point in which philosophical knowledge has its norm. The process of truth is subjective *and* objective, it is an absolute process, no less absolute than life or knowing, to which it belongs as their self-realisation. This is why it will terminate in absolute knowing.

One more important and prominent topic in the *Preface* of the *Phenomenology* remains to be discussed and that is Hegel's theory of the *speculative sentence*. We have already encountered a theory of this sort in Hegel's apocrypha, the unpublished early writings.<sup>20</sup> It finds the defining characteristic of philosophical expression in the specific motion that happens, as Hegel sees it, between subject and predicate in the genuinely philosophical sentence. After what we just said above, the *philosophical* sentence as an expression of philosophical truth obviously cannot consist in something being 'subsumed' under something else, in which an individual, the subject, is determined to be something universal, the predicate. The philosophical sentence should rather give expression to the *concrete unity* of the two, i.e. it should not designate the subject and the predicate for themselves and then thirdly their synthesis, but must be their *midpoint*, the totality they constitute and in which they can be what they really are; it has to give expression to their mediation. In completely general terms then this means that the philosophical or speculative sentence reveals truth to be the motion through those *moments*, not a 'property' of the elements or of their linkage. That sounds initially like a relatively abstract program and one could justifiably doubt whether it can succeed at all, namely to exemplify philosophical truth using just the simple grammatical form of the common sentence. But then in the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology* Hegel gives the speculative sentence some prominence, and even if this theory is not found in the later writings, or at least not directly, it has understandably attracted considerable attention among the commentators. What is going on here then in detail?

Hegel introduces the speculative as such as the "*logical necessity*" lying in "the nature of what is, namely to be in its being its own concept" (GW IX, 40; Miller ¶ 56). Concept and object in the speculative perspective do not relate to each other such that, external to each other, something could *be something* and have its *concept* outside it as just a term or name. Hegel does not understand the concept in nominalistic terms, but as the inner motive force constituting the identity of the matter itself, its "essence", which, being the logical gathering

20 See ch. 3.6 *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, p. 78 above.

together of the matter in its identity, is just as much its knowledge, its subjectivity. This can be best approached again in examples like the concepts of life, I and freedom, all of which are only to be had “simultaneously with the matter”. Viewed from the standpoint of the content, in structuring itself the matter effectively raises itself to subjectivity, which may be initially only implicit subjectivity, but which is nevertheless already an objective thought. In this spirit we can recall Hegel’s *Dissertatio* here, with its attempt to find the self-developing concept, subjectivity, even out there in the external world of nature. For Hegel the concept is not something that we simply attach to things, rather it is—and this now fully in the sense of the simultaneity thesis—“the object’s own self, which manifests as the *object’s becoming*” (GW IX, 42; Miller ¶ 60). The concept is the selfhood of the thing that sustains itself in its process quality, in its development, in which *the thing* is immediately *true*—*ens et verum convertuntur*—and in that also *intelligible*; similarly the concept is conceived as subject, I, and this too as “process” not as an abstract form confined to itself. The merely *passive* subject, the substantial subject (like Aristotle’s οὐσία, *ousia*) or the free and *subjective* subject (in the sense of the form I of the transcendental philosophy), “perishes” in the motion of the concept that is its own determination. This means that what is (abstractly) identical and supposed to be fixed in a sentence as the subject is instead a process of predications. As Hegel says, it disappears “into the differences”—the predicates—“and into the content”—for the predicates are qualifications of content—“becoming their determination, i.e. both the differentiated content and its motion rather than remaining aloof from it” (GW IX, 43; Miller ¶ 60). This demonstrates that the idealisation lying in every sentence, in every simple linguistic expression fixing subject and predicate as autonomous terms, is incapable of doing justice to the matter itself. “The firm ground the reasoning of the understanding has in the passive subject quakes then and it is precisely only this motion itself which becomes the object” (*ibid.*). Zeno of Elea in his time revealed exactly the same problem when he showed with his paradoxes that it is really not possible to grasp motion through conceptual identification, that is to determine it free of contradiction in fixed parameters—and that is precisely the contradiction, expressing motion in fixed parameters. If M is a moving point and this is taken to mean that at a given time *t* it simultaneously is at a given point S *and is not* at that point, then the truth of motion is precisely this “synthesis” of that “*and is not*” destroying the unrelated indifference of space and time and forcing us to think of a new totality with respect to the elements of the relation. Simply put, the problem of the common sentence lies in the fact that it accomplishes its determination through stasis, it is a fixing form, while the speculative *content*,

the dynamic process concept, as well as the concrete universal within that, *cannot* be projected onto a fixing identification.

One immediate effect of Hegel's demonstration of the inadequacy of the common sentence in dealing with speculative content is that the predicate can no longer be more general than the subject. The much abused rose as it stands for the individual in the logical example sentence "the rose is red"—the *individual* that is supposed to fall under what is a *universal* of redness which is nowhere to be found—can in truth only be red as it, this conceptual individual, unfolds this property, its *individual* colour quality, from within itself so that it only has the universal "red" as a moment. As Hegel puts it:

The dispersed content is . . . bound together under the self; such content is not a universal free from this subject which would apply to many other subjects. The content is, in fact, no longer a predicate of the subject. It is now substance, the essence and the concept of the matter under consideration" (ibid.)

Indeed the subject *is* its predicates, it "lives" and "knows" them, and they are not simply assigned to it, instead it passes over into those several determinations that are only separated from it by abstractive thinking and turned into formal essences. When predicating consciousness becomes aware of the speculative unity of its object, it is always thrown out of the predicates back to the subject and conversely the subject, normally confined to its role of substrate of the sentence, resolves itself into the predicates as its determinations. The abstract object identity, the "idea" of the rose or its *mere* concept, thus lies exclusively in predicating consciousness. Hegel says "here replacing that [objective] subject, the knowing I turns out to be the binding of the predicates, the real subject holding them together" (ibid.). Kant's transcendental apperception, it should be noted here, was shown to be a necessary moment of the predication process. The rose or the red are only independent identical determinations for external knowing; in truth they are differentiated, reflexive determinations, for in its speculative meaning the predicate refers immediately back to the subject and not to arbitrarily other objects that also "fall under" it. Hegel sums this up in the following terms.

The force with which the predicate knocks itself back into the subject is a measure of thinking's loss of that firm, objective ground it had in the subject, for it falls back not into itself but into the subject of the content. (GW IX, 44; Miller ¶ 62)

The speculative sentence essentially consists in the awareness of this inconsistency between grammatical form and destructive content; in the antithesis between the two sides lies the germ of a higher harmony. The philosophical sentence digs its way into the content and does not leave the consciousness knowing it alone as simply “detached from the world”; instead it confronts it with the objective, with the *other* self, to which it must find a relation without resorting to smooth schemata or abbreviating abstractions. Hegel sees the difficulty that non-philosophers have in reading philosophical texts as coming down to the fact that no bridges are built from the philosophical text to the system of references or the matrix of concepts in which the non-philosopher thinks, instead that system of references and the matrix itself are brought into question. This is a direct consequence of the motion of the concepts, which does not only happen on the ‘object level’, but must involve the reader him- or herself, drawing in that reading consciousness. The speculative sentence pushes beyond the simple sentence; like truth it drives on unfolding itself as process and presenting itself as motion. The philosophical proof of a sentence is for Hegel its dialectical development, the presentation of its content as a moment of concrete subjectivity, not a sanitised, ‘germ-free’ statement of fact. Once again this makes it clear why philosophy cannot do without the system and why it cannot dispense with language. The idea of the common, fixing sentence allows it to be reduced to an abstract and extra-linguistic ‘propositional content’. The speculative sentence points to its continuation in other sentences, to the presentation, the linguistic patterning of the truth process, which in that is also certainly not simply a ‘language game’ that can start anywhere. Being form and content *simultaneously* and producing itself as both lies in the logical necessity of speculation. The theorem of the “speculative sentence” is essentially an anticipation of the logical thesis of the congruence of form and content denying the possibility of the absolute separation of the two, which is one of the central claims of Hegel’s philosophy as it is indeed of all dialectical thinking.

Much shorter than the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology* is the *Introduction*, which was written earlier; our remarks on it will be correspondingly brief. The *Introduction* begins with the highly Kantian question as to whether, before we can advance to philosophical knowledge, we should not come to an understanding on knowing “which is regarded as the tool we deploy to master the absolute or the instrument through which we regard it” (GW IX, 53; Miller ¶ 73). Kant did after all seek to make it the duty of philosophy to determine the limits of knowledge in a first critical pass and only then, within the limits set by that initial critical scrutiny, to move on to the deed itself. The fear was

that, as Hegel says, “because cognition is a faculty of a very special kind and scope, without more precisely determining its nature and limits, we might end up with clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth” (ibid.). Giving in to this fear means “a barrier would fall between knowing and the absolute completely separating them” (ibid.), which is also confirmed by Kant. Knowing considered as a tool does not leave the object to which it is applied untouched; it forms it making it into an object *for us*, into an appearance, from which the object in its essence, its being-in-itself, must that much more sharply distance itself. Hegel’s solution is again what we already know from the Jena system drafts; knowing is itself the absolute, the *a priori* of philosophy so that there can be no talk of an absolute that would somehow be something distinct from knowing in its pure and original sense. If the absolute, Hegel says, “were not in and for itself already with us and that by its own volition”, then it would not make sense to put out conceptual “traps” to catch it like “lime twigs” to catch a bird (ibid.). Indeed, we always stand in the light of the absolute and even the finite patterns of appearing knowledge the *Phenomenology* runs through stand in this light, if in finite refractions. Finite refraction, the refraction through the specific opposition of consciousness, makes knowing into a merely appearing, an objectively bound knowledge. This knowledge and even the immediate emergence of philosophical science itself as an appearing knowledge is, as one could say, a non-absolute mode of the presence of the absolute; knowledge that is unreal because it has yet to be realised. As the midwife in this birth process, the process of realisation of appearing knowledge, Hegel names scepticism. Scepticism is the “insightful awareness of the untruth of appearing knowledge” and must be directed “at the entire range of appearing consciousness” (GW IX, 56; Miller ¶ 78). The goal of the path, which we have referred to several times as self-sustaining knowledge, is arrived at when knowledge “finds itself and no longer needs to go beyond itself, where concept corresponds to object and object to concept” (GW IX, 57; Miller ¶ 80). The path itself is Janus-headed. In the perspective of the consciousness under scrutiny it is the path of the experience that consciousness makes with its objects and through these with its world and with itself. In fact, of course, this world is logically transparent to us, the observers, so it is itself a scientific, rational path. Beside its introductory function, then, the *Phenomenology* is also a component part of the system; at least it constitutes an anticipation of the system. Its later appearance in a shortened version inside the system is not really so surprising in the context of all the reductions and changes of perspective accompanying the transformation of the great book of 1807 into the philosophy of subjective spirit in the *Encyclopaedia*.

### 3 Sensibility Reaches Understanding

Now to the main text of the *Phenomenology*. The first chapter, the first position of the first section *Consciousness*, is entitled “Sense certainty—*this* and opinion”. A beginning is made with the consciousness that is effectively totally consumed by the affections of sense, a complete *tabula rasa* for immediacy, for the immediately given. This has an affinity with modern sensualism, which, in determined opposition to all kinds of intellectualism, insists that thinking is not the way to true being, for that is only available via the “aesthetic” acceptance of what is. Even Kant appears to be on this wavelength when he writes in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

All our cognition starts from the senses, goes from there to the understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us to work on the matter of intuition and bring it under the highest unity of thinking.<sup>21</sup>

For Kant the knowledge of the understanding and of reason appears to be a result of processing the material given to the senses which entails an (to be fair unavoidable) alienation of that given itself, while sensualism wants simply to “accept” what “is”. It wants, as Hegel says, merely to “relate to it . . . immediately, or accepting” it, that is to “change” nothing in that which offers itself as existing, as the other or what is external to consciousness; it attempts “to keep understanding free of comprehension” (GW IX, 63; Miller ¶ 90) and in this formulation there lies already the first point of criticism of the claim to the immediacy of sense impressions. Sense certainty regards itself initially as a peculiarly authentic knowledge and quite irrefutable. It sees itself as wholly immersed in being, completely filled with being and free of any accompanying thoughts, in short exceptionally “concrete”. This last claim is the great error. For when it comes to answering the question what *this* exactly *is* which is given to the senses, when it comes to categorising it and thereby showing that sense certainty really is a *knowledge* and not simply feeling, impression or opinion, then sense certainty gets into serious trouble. The logical means available to it are the poorest of all; all it can express is a point of impression and it can do no more than *assure us* that its object is given to it immediately and as such “is”, that it is *here* and *now* and that it is individual, a *this* which one can *indicate*. Sense certainty has no possibility of getting beyond these *generalities*, which

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<sup>21</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 355/A 298. The English translation is by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Woods, Cambridge 1998.

tell us nothing other than the fact that the gulf between being and I has been spanned merely *as such* by a relation in which being is *for* the I or consciousness, without being able to express any features of the content of this being. For sense impression there exists neither four pears nor four apples, because sensual immediacy as such contains neither quantity or counting nor the qualitative distinction between apples and pears; what we only *post festum* call an apple is for sensibility precisely only a *this* which is *here* and *now* for me, just as we *post festum* might call it a pear. For the pure sense impression, for pure receptivity that claims to be untouched by logic, not impregnated by thinking, apples and pears must be the *same thing*. All assurances to the contrary, sense certainty's insistence on mere "looking" to arrive at whole and complete being is not concrete thinking at all, but extremely abstract. Sense knowledge says "here", "now", "this there", but what it means is in each case something *other* and it vanishes as soon as any of these *indications* are uttered. Whoever, like Faust, wants to embrace the moment never even makes it to communicating to the others just how beautiful it is, for the subject vanishes on the long path from subject to predicate. The statement "this *moment now* is beautiful" is never true, for its truth has, as Hegel says, "gone stale" during the utterance and it would better be expressed by saying "this moment just now *was* beautiful". Unfortunately, this is no longer the expression of immediate sense certainty but already that of reflected sense certainty which has raised the individual of sense to the status of a universal. This holds for any object of sense; *here*, *this*, *I*, and simply indicating something do not individualise or isolate being as they are supposed to. In fact, they have multiple meanings and the single thing intended is precisely what does not come out in the respective expression. This piece of paper, Hegel says, is always only meant or intended, never becoming something known. Hegel goes so far as to state that any attempt at this stage of consciousness to arrive at knowledge of this piece of paper, i.e. to define it as something real, would cause the paper to "decay" (GW IX, 70; Miller ¶ 110). Now this does not refute knowledge, but only the opinion that it is at all possible to reach *knowledge* in the attitude of pure sensibility. Here the language itself, according to Hegel, pushes on beyond sensuality. He speaks of the "divine nature" of language, namely that "of immediately inverting opinion, meaning . . . and . . . of not even letting it *get into the words* at all" (ibid.). Language makes us aware that the object of consciousness is definitely not something merely immediate, but is a mediation, a *universal* that is universally related. I become aware that to be able to address and identify an object at all I have to regard it (on a logical level higher than that of sense impression) already as a unity of unity and multiplicity, as a thing with many properties. The consciousness that in this sense not only knows itself to be the

other of the object, but which asserts a difference and a relation on the part of the object in order at all to identify it or to represent it truly, is already *perceiving* consciousness.

The chapter on perception speaks thus of thinghood that is “capable of truth” (adequate to itself and to me), but with that also of the possibility that the very immediacy, the immediate sensual *givenness* of this internally differentiated object can be deceptive and is immediately untrue. This is only the other side of the coin, for in the standpoint of perception consciousness itself formulates *truth conditions* and no longer behaves merely receptively. Kant showed in the transcendental deduction of the categories, the pure concepts of the understanding, that these categories shape perception in advance, making it possible at all as something definite, determinate.<sup>22</sup> Perception addresses the thing of sense pre-formed as *something*; it focuses on an objective unity, or in Aristotelian terms, on the *substance* or the substrate, in which, while maintaining objective identity, “properties” can appear. Now, however much its genesis depends upon consciousness, this autonomous identity, or being-for-itself, of the object of perception constitutes for consciousness a kind of beyond, an ideal vanishing point, which itself is not immediately perceived, but which is justified in the ‘functional’ terms of perception. For only oriented to that vanishing point of identity does the variously perceived thing achieve a structural unity and determinate “objectivity”. What this model does above all is to provide an objective, ontological foundation for predication, which in this way is capable of truth as the object is now structured like our judgments about it, it is one thing with many properties just as judgments represent one subject with many different predicates. In fact, this model actually exports the immediate opposition of consciousness into the thing. It turns the general confrontation of subject and object into a special structure of the thing, namely that of substance and accident and what’s more, although still not accessible to itself, it renders itself perceptible as form in the thing. This all entails the simultaneous projection into the thing of the task of bringing subject and object into the unity of a determinate knowledge, that is at least if now the thing is supposed to be in itself the existing unity of its unity and its many properties. And as if all that were not enough, perceiving consciousness no longer understands itself simply as an immediate I, as sense impression did; now it is “doubled” into “subjective” and “objective” I’s. First it sees itself as basically a subjective identity, as the formal universal of thinking as such, but then again it is also a particular thinking thrown apart into various different perceptions and to that extent characterised by difference. The syllogism of perception in all this is

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22 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, especially B 165 ff., § 27.

that a *thing* which is inherently one, if for us initially many, should correspond to a *thinking* also inherently one but immediately broken up into multiple perceptions, and that in this thinking the thing be *known*. The weak point in this syllogism is the midpoint, the *medius terminus*, which is supposed to bring the two sides together, the two sides being the *subject*, which is capable of deceiving itself in immediate perception, and the *properties* of the thing, which in their multiplicity appear to be accidental and even capable of contradicting each other. The midpoint of the “syllogism of perception” consists in a doubly crumbling immediacy; the particular subject is for the particular object merely “inherent, in itself”, not already in complete agreement with it. For the axiology of perception the real problem lies with the object, which must first be raised out of its immediacy. What is fluid is not solid; nevertheless perception finds, for instance, that if the word ‘water’ is to designate an objective identity, it is first fluid and then again solid. It will thus define the abstract identity ‘water’ such that this identity is *also non-identical*, not simply self-equality but a *process* comprising possible properties. This process is the identical water but not simply for itself; water alone, taken for itself, is not partly solid, partly fluid, partly gas, but is rather each one only in *relation* to other objects, e.g. in relation to the sun that melts the ice. This implies for perception that it cannot arrive at genuine objective identity by fixing it, but only by taking other objective identities and their interaction with the first identity into account. Perception again pluralises identity; it realises that the object is not only *for it* (perception), but is also *in itself* essentially *for others*, indeed that only in this being-for-others, in being related (including the relation of perception itself) is its “true essence” revealed. The object of perception is now inherently a differentiated identity, that *eo ipso* can be questioned once again as to a comprehensive identity and relation. Taking up this question means that consciousness is no longer a perceiving one, but is already *understanding*, for what it seeks is no longer to be found in what the senses have to offer, but only in the *general essence of things* and their linkage, i.e. in what is intelligible to the understanding. Consciousness is no longer concerned with appearance, but with the law of appearance as it moves onto the level of that very popular metaphysics commonly known as ‘natural science’.

The following chapter develops the metaphysics of the understanding, especially that of (Galilean-Newtonian) natural science, and as such it is one of the most difficult in the entire *Phenomenology*. “Force and Understanding, Appearance and the Extrasensory World” is the forbidding title of the chapter. What on earth is going on here? The terms assembled in this title do not seem to have anything to do with each other. The first thing we have to do is remind ourselves that we are still in the first stage of the process of knowledge arriving

at itself, in the position of 'consciousness'. The distribution of values within the ontology of consciousness is basically as follows. The object claims the value of truth, essence, the standard, while consciousness just looks on reflecting, depicting, naming the object. The object is *in itself*, but it is also supposed to be *for* consciousness (something being-for, or related as such), it being clear, of course, that it makes no difference to the objectivity of the object whether it is for consciousness or not. The antithesis between the *is* and the *ought* of truth exists only for consciousness, it still does not concern the object, even though consciousness has in many ways already become active in securing the objectivity of the object. It is still consciousness that is supposed to determine itself in the manner the object prescribes for it, not the converse; that arrangement, the object being determined as consciousness prescribes it, will be the basic position of self-consciousness as well as of all practical behaviour. The consciousness being studied here, however, is not practical in its attitude but *theoretical*; it regards itself as being determined by the object not as determining it. The opinion of sense certainty was initially that it had no difficulty with this theoretical approach, because that which is not consciousness is given to the senses immediately and is for consciousness, it is as "this" definitely "there" "here and now". But then no sustainable objectivity of the object flowed from these givens, from the "this", the "here" and the "now". Sense affection expresses only a point relation as such, which as a relation is merely a form of determination and does not give us any things determined distinctly by opposition to each other. Consciousness has to do with things, with objective unities conceived of as immediately independent of the relation of sense, first in perception. The object of perception is a thing of many properties, a systematically complex whole persisting inherently in relations and even appearing resolved into its relations. If we return to the example of water in its distinct 'aggregate phases', then it turns out that perception never really perceives 'water'. The substance or *hypokeimenon* 'water' is not identical to the fluid that today will be used to water the flowers and tomorrow will have to be chipped away from the pot with hammer and chisel. It is certainly an interesting question as to what then water actually is independent of its qualitative perceptibility and of its relation to other perceivable objects. Aristotelian natural science was principally the attempt to think of objects of nature solely in the horizon of perception; we learn there for instance that water is 'wet' and 'heavy', specifically distinguishing itself from 'dry' and 'light' elements. The natural scientist from the school of Galileo, in contrast, would tell us that water considered purely in its objective identity is, namely hydrogen oxide,  $H_2O$ . Neither solid, fluid nor gas,  $H_2O$  is conceived of only as a disposition to take up any of these three so-called aggregate phases. It is precisely for this reason not perceivable.

Moreover, it is essentially an idealisation, an object of the understanding not of sense. Saving objective identity from vanishing into the processual pluralisation of identities is an *intervention* by the understanding and with this we have arrived at the standpoint of “Force and Understanding”.

The standpoint of understanding consists in regarding the objective world as such as a world, as a homogeneous sphere of *objects*. Objects as identity investments behave in this world with respect to each other *according to laws*; knowledge of the world is now *idealiter* always the knowledge of these lawful relations among objects. It is no longer in any way about this or that immediately perceptible object as such; the focus has shifted fundamentally to the general manner in which such objects relate to each other. This means we are now concerned with ideal objects, objects immediately defined by laws and which are no longer simply other to each other. The fact that never a single perceptible object has ever fallen the way Galileo’s law of fall requires is of no interest to the law at all. The law says that every object ‘in itself’ falls as the law prescribes independent of whether in any given case any of the possible ‘accompanying conditions’ might hinder the execution of the law. The law holds *per definitionem* only under ideal conditions, but these ideal conditions are exactly what inherently structures the world of the objects and then, for instance, making predictions possible, which are absolutely reliable as long as nothing among the non-ideal existences gets in the way. Here Hegel makes an observation that is of fundamental importance for the logic of the standpoint of the understanding. The objects of the understanding are clearly no longer ‘substances’, but *functions* of the laws defining them. They are certainly autonomous or *for themselves*; the earth is not the sun and the sun is not the earth. But then we have to add that they have their objective determinacy as being-for-itself only in the relation that the law, e.g. gravitation, assigns to them, that is, they are determinate things only for each other and in that sense only by virtue of each other. The chemical elements, for instance, considered as being-for-itself are generally thought of as ‘substances’, but what they are specifically (also as specifically *chemical* substances), they are in fact once again only by virtue of their positions in the system of elements, that is under the law that first determines their objectivity. This is how, as Hegel sees it, that for the standpoint of the understanding a “unity of being-for-itself and of being for another” exists or that “the absolute antithesis” is “immediately the identical essence” (GW IX, 83; Miller ¶ 134). We saw above that even perception coordinated distinct identities of thinghood, setting them beside each other, such as the water and the sun. David Hume believed that we do not really get beyond such coordinations or mental associations and that the assertion of laws of nature is in truth only a matter of stating probability rules.

Kant countered by defending the position of the understanding, of the laws of nature, the standpoint of objective knowledge. Kant knew that to do this it was necessary to start with a sphere of objects at rest in a point of unity and to represent all determinate objects within their constitution as already referred back to this pole of unity. For Kant we have the right to accept the idealisations of natural science because objects as such are idealisations that obtain their definition through their correlation in the *single* “context of experience”, in that one world we seek to grasp conceptually. Conditions for the possibility of experience are simultaneously conditions for the possibility of the objects of experience. This means in abstract terms that the capacity of the objects to be for us is the measure of the range of their capacity of being objects as such. Or, as Hegel says, being-for-itself and being for another have become the same thing. This identity has a double meaning, one of which is “objective” and the other is the “subjective” meaning of that. Being for another and being-for-itself are “objectively” identical to the extent that the object acquires its identity from the context of the objects, that is from the natural law. Objects that enter into the context of experience define each other mutually and only an object defined in this way can claim to be called a scientifically “known” one. At the same time, however, being-for-itself and being for another are also *subjectively* identical, for the objectivity constituted in the manner described is an objectivity that is immediately revealed to the subject, it is indeed a thoroughly subjective objectivity, which is precisely the meaning of Kant’s statement that in understanding the world we only deal with appearances, with what is being-for-us, that is with being-for-another where the other in question is us. The world of the understanding is, tautologically speaking, a world we understand; implementing the structure of understanding is about assimilating the external and incorporating it into the world revealed to the identity of the understanding.

The logic of understanding the world is the logic of a conception of unity for which subjective identity in the sense of the identity given above of being-for-itself and being for another is immediately the identity of what is external, of objectivity as such. This implies that the standpoint of the understanding with its inner necessity postulates a unified science of the kind which today is associated with physicalism. In the vanishing point of the objectivist understanding of the world there always lies, at least as regulative, the idea of the ‘world formula’, the *one single* law that is so universal it does indeed bring all determinate objectivity together under it. For the ‘world formula’ would hold what Hegel expresses in the following terms, “The objects taken as independent transit immediately into their unity, their unity immediately into its unfolding, and then this back again into the reduction (to the unity of being-for-itself)”

(GW IX, 84; Miller ¶ 136). We said above that in the objective world the individual objects are functions of their context of laws, which they reflect in themselves and into which they return again. The context or law gives them existence and takes it away again. The context itself is not an object but the horizon of possible objectivity playing its role in the constitution of the objects. How is this to be “objectively” understood? Hegel’s answer is that objective science does not operate solely with objects, but with forces too. Force, δύναμις, *dynamis*, is at once the real possibility of the object and its actuality without itself being a real object. The concrete law of nature speaks of objects *and* of forces, which easily leads to misunderstandings about the difference in status between the two moments. Kant regards matter as composed of attraction and repulsion, of an attractive and a repulsive force. The forces represent the relation of matter to others and to itself, they symbolise the potentiality for relation of matter as such, but they are not objective in the same way that a specific extended piece of matter is. Newton composed actual circular motion from centrifugal and centripetal forces and Hegel chides him, as we have already seen in the *Dissertatio*, for illegitimately taking the forces themselves as objective givens, although they are nothing but theoretical moments in the analysis of what is actually, objectively given. One can set a force beside *every* actual thing as that which makes the actual actual; one can refer to every actual thing in this sense “twice”, once as immediate and then again as mediated (by itself); its “mediations” are then its “forces”. According to modal logic everything that is actually real is also possible, *ab esse ad posse valet consequentia*—this means that for everything that enters into objectivity there exists prior to it formally a force, the power to effect that entry into objectivity. Herbs heal through their healing power; the expert derives his status as expert from his competence; and man sleeps, according to Molière, because of the *vis dormitiva*, the power of sleep. Still, as we have seen, speaking of force makes good sense, for it shows the object as *reflected* through others in general, ultimately as essentially *reflected* through the totality of objects. What is important here for Hegel is that with the concept of force the objectifying understanding thinks something that is “non-objective”, “something inside things” (GW IX, 85; Miller ¶ 135). The object is due to an idealisation, but it always remains perceptible, which is to say that there are objects only if they can be regarded as at least potentially perceptible. This does not exclude the possibility that objects, for example objects of the future or the past, may be just “deduced”, as when for instance every prediction in natural science implies that its objects will exist in the future or archaeology deduces from a few stones the objective location of a temple that has long since disappeared. Of course perceptibility remains fundamental—this is Kant’s basic postulate of the restriction of all scientific experience possible for

us to what is given to the senses. The force, the power, however, the reflected thing, is precisely what is not given to the senses. It is rather only 'in' the thing of sense, just as the forces of attraction and repulsion are 'in' matter or the competence is 'in' the expert. Clearly, it is desirable that the competence of the expert not remain 'in' him but occasionally externalises, or expresses itself. It holds for force in general that "it is necessary . . . that it *externalise, express itself*" (ibid.). How then does force express itself? It does so when it is "solicited" or provoked to enter into appearance. But then what solicits a force to express itself is another force; just as, according to Newton, the appearance of a centrifugal force implies immediately the appearance of a centripetal force, or as the expression of one intention provokes the expression of the opposite intention. The two forces are related through their opposition and in that they resolve each other into the resulting actuality. *Actio* and *reactio* constitute the objective world only together. They have, as Hegel says, precisely in their expression "the pure significance of *vanishing*" (GW IX, 87; Miller ¶ 141). Force vanishes into the actuality it imposes; a competence does not remain a faculty but becomes a fact; attraction and repulsion constitute matter without being any sort of essences lying behind it. Force is only the ideality of the object; it is the thought that accompanies it and the world of forces is a purely ideal, supersensible or extrasensory world, in which only thoughts play with thoughts. As hydrogen oxide water is only the capability of appearing in all three perceptible aggregate phases and as such it is, as we have seen, a pure thought. Hydrogen oxide is in this sense the 'something inside' perceptible water, which itself as appearance constitutes the *medius terminus*, its link to the understanding. The understanding, which understands the outside world via the extrasensory world and appearance via the 'inner' essences, has for all that acquired a beyond, that world of laws of nature, only via appearance. "Extrasensory is what is sensuous and perceptible asserted *in its truth*; but then the *truth* of what is sensuous and perceived is to be *appearance*. The extrasensory is thus *appearance as appearance*" (GW IX, 90; Miller ¶ 147). This extremely important formulation of Hegel's—grasping the extrasensory as what makes appearance appearance, as that within appearance which shows that appearance is not the truth or the whole objective relation—is what permits the understanding to set itself above the immediately perceptible and occupy itself solely with the realm of idealities, of laws and even ultimately of the *one* law. The understanding seeks the necessary not the contingent. For the understanding then the "*extrasensory* world is . . . a *peaceful realm of laws*, and while beyond the perceptible world that manifests law only in constant change, the extrasensory world is still *as such present* within that perceptible world and its immediate

still image" (GW IX, 91; Miller ¶ 149). The understanding is a born metaphysician and all physics rests, as Kant also realised, on metaphysical first principles.

One problem remains however for the physics and for the metaphysics of the understanding, it never gets back to the appearance it methodically jumps over to get to the law. The understanding has the regulative notion that what appears can be represented by constantly progressive *specification* of the law, but this comes down to an approximation method constantly running after appearances. This is important to the consciousness of understanding because it undermines its certainty that in the extrasensory world of laws it does have to do with the true world. In other words the understanding has arrived at the concept of appearance, but clearly not at its being. If truth is the agreement of concept and being, then it has not arrived at the truth, but only at an abstraction of it. Aristotle raised the objection against Plato that the idea of the dog cannot be the true dog, but rather the true dog must be the existence of the idea of the dog as οὐσία αἰσθητή, *ousia aisthete*, as a perceptible substance, as this individual dog here. Aristotle certainly does not question the existence of a species universal of the dog, on the contrary; for him too the form principle exists as a constant, as the idea of the dog—a dog gives birth to a dog and not to a cat. But then Aristotle does say that this individual dog may not be jumped over. Nobody has ever been bitten by the idea of the dog, but with individual dogs the situation is quite different. The idea of the dog and the individual dog bear the same name, but the homonymy here must not obscure the fact that they are different. In the individual, Hegel says, the extrasensory world of laws is inverted and what has the same name is now what is not identical—not in the sense that we return to the simple object of perception from which the understanding abstracted, but in the sense that the transcendence of the ideal world into a world of the concrete universal has emerged, which appears to be an inversion of the first extrasensory world. As idea the dog is one, but as individual it is one of uncountably many, 'a many'. As idea it is a living thing, but as an individual it is not only mortal, but one long process of dying. As idea it is an object, as an individual it shows itself to be a subject—and so on, so that Hegel can say that beside that first world the problem of individuation gives us a second world also beyond sense, the world of the individual existence of the idea. It is supersensible because on the one hand it refers to the first extrasensory world, while on the other hand individuality as such is not perceptible by the senses; individuality is not simply singularity, but self-reference, a relation to itself via a relation to another and it is precisely this kind of relatedness that is not an object of sense but a conceptual structure. It is perhaps already clear exactly what kind of conceptual structure we have here in Hegel's second

extrasensory world. We got to know this structure in the *System fragment* of 1800—it is the structure or the dialectical conceptual form of life. If the formulation were not so easily misunderstood, one might say that Hegel's second extrasensory world is the 'life world'. The *world of life* is preferable for our purposes, for life is the universal that immediately divides itself into a disjunction. It is the unity only present in separation or in individuation and which is only the universal, the unity of the individuals, because the individuals themselves only exist as living, as inversions of the idea of life into a self-relation, a relation to itself that is simultaneously a relation to others. All subsequent parts of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* will stand on the ground of the *world of life*. Indeed, in the very next pattern of consciousness a question of life and death soon arises. Consciousness itself, however, which up to now believed that it was only possible to have truth in objective intention and in submission to the object, to objectivity, realises that it itself is directly involved in the extrasensory object it now has, in life. Consciousness knows that it participates in this object now, or even more, that it not only participates in it, but that it is itself this object. Life not only stands before it, consciousness lives it too and knowing this is what makes consciousness *self-consciousness*.

#### 4 Self-Consciousness Attains Reason

The Self-consciousness chapter, chapter IV of the *Phenomenology*, bears the title "Self-Certainty's Truth" and after a rather extended introductory section the two main sections follow which are entitled "Lordship and Bondage" and "Freedom of Self-Consciousness; Stoicism, Scepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness". With the knowledge that consciousness itself is the realisation of its own object the basic axiology changes here. It no longer seeks the truth *outside itself*, but instead seeks to prove to what is outside it that it, self-consciousness, is the truth or the true object. "Certainty is its own object and consciousness is its own truth", says Hegel (GW IX, 103; Miller ¶ 166). This principle is in fact, as already mentioned, the presupposition of all practice, for nobody can accomplish anything without self-certainty and without the certainty that the object can, should, and will give in to the impulse of the self. Self-consciousness is a practical form of knowledge, which is why Hegel does not have to deal with the traditional theoretical problem of self-consciousness. This traditional problem asks how a *subject* can refer to an *object* that is the subject itself or how can it represent itself while still referring to the object, for in this self-reference it cannot be objectively represented. Hegel's self-consciousness does not refer to an object in order to find itself again theoretically within it, for it knows itself

to be the self of all objectivity and behaves accordingly. “The I is the content of the relation and the relating itself”, says Hegel (*ibid.*). The I has returned to itself from out of otherness, from out of the objective relation and everything it had to go through in the objective relation is now just an object subordinated to it. Its real object is its own life, which is its own self. All other objectivity has now only negative meaning, i.e. it is already overcome. This is why death plays an important role in self-consciousness right from the start. Self-consciousness is only the *divided* life, only one individual immediately (not yet self-consciously) confronted with another individual. In itself, i.e. again not yet self-consciously, the object, the other of self-consciousness, is just as much self-consciousness. Self-consciousness must however first experience the independence of the other and let it emerge for it, it must first break down its immediate impulse to regard the object merely as a means serving its own life. The object which is only a means for its own life, only one pass among others through the proof of the certainty of self-consciousness that it is itself the truth, is an object of *desire*. In desire self-consciousness seeks to saturate itself with and fulfil itself through its objects. It experiences, however, that desire, the active orientation to the *negation* of the object, which wants to know and prove itself to be the centre, the midpoint of life, constantly regenerates itself. This means, however, that the object which should satisfy the desire is also constantly reset. It does not help to know myself to be the truth, the meaning and goal of the external objects I am constantly destroying. This certainty remains formal and determined by the object destroyed so that the action of desire just iterates in constantly new destructions of external objectivity. Only the object which negates itself for the sake of self-consciousness would break this iteration of the action of desire. This object capable of negating itself cannot be any simple external object; it must itself be a self-consciousness. The other self-consciousness, however, is just as independent as the first self-consciousness, because it understands itself to be the truth of life in exactly the same way as the first one. Now we have “a *self-consciousness for a self-consciousness*” (GW IX, 108; Miller ¶ 177), and the question is which of the two may claim for itself to be true life or the truth of life.

The claim of immediate self-consciousness to this truth of life appears to be limited or even abolished by the counterclaim of the other self-consciousness to be it too. The direct result of this situation is the ‘recognition struggle’, the attempt by each of the self-consciousnesses to force the other to recognise it as the dominant one, as the universal. This struggle, it must be emphasised, cannot be fought out with objects; it is a struggle of will against will, both wanting the same thing, something which is not objective in any sense we have encountered up to now. Some interpreters have suggested that Hegel

could have Hobbes' theory of the state of nature in mind here. In the natural state, that is below the level of genuine statehood, according to Hobbes we have a "*bellum omnium in omnes*", a war of all against all, moreover, as Hobbes has it, this happens because of the *equality* of the subjects. After Hobbes has explained that all men are by nature in bodily and mental capabilities more or less equal and that individual differences are ultimately of no consequence, we encounter the following observation.

From this equality of ability grows equality of hope of reaching our goals. So when two men demand the same thing, the enjoyment of which however both cannot have, they become enemies; and on the path to their goal (which principally consists in their self-preservation and only occasionally in their pleasure) they try to destroy each other or to subdue each other.<sup>23</sup>

Hegel, in contrast, regards self-consciousness as striving not only for something *equal* to the other self-consciousness; rather it seeks identity with itself, what one could call the imperturbable certainty of being life or truth itself. This only intensifies the struggle, of course, for now they both want the same equality. In this struggle it is about the eminent representation of life and so it is not a question of simply impressing the opponent, it has to be a struggle of life and death. Theoretically the struggle can go any one of three ways. The two could remain in struggle, which then would never end. One of them could die and then there would be only one survivor. Finally, one of the combatants could give up the fight and submit to the other accepting a limited, particular life. Only the last option, the asymmetric outcome, takes us further; it is the one that takes things forward because only in this way can a socially structured life world with a specific *relation of recognition* result. The social structure initially has a differential, it consists of a lord and a bondsman, a serf, one one-sidedly recognised self-consciousness and one recognising self-consciousness. This happens for the following reason. The one has maintained itself as a *pure* self-consciousness, as the I that was only concerned with its own selfhood even at the cost of sacrificing its life—the other made the “experience”, “that for him life is just as essential as pure self-consciousness” (GW IX, 112; Miller ¶ 189), i.e. it preferred “substantially” being alive to subjectively having self-consciousness. The dominant self-consciousness is the one that asserted its readiness to put its life on the line, while the initially subjugated self-consciousness, the

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<sup>23</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1, c. 13.

one that becomes merely existing self-consciousness, was the one that preferred life over self-assertion.

Under the surface *both* are forms of self-assertion, but the immediate result is that one self-consciousness is the lord of the other, the former is the truth of the latter such that the consciousness of the serf has effectively transmitted its truth to the other finding it in the consciousness of the lord, whose will is now the serf's own will. The diverse social-philosophical applications admitted by this theory of Hegel's, which have always been of special interest to his Marxist interpreters, cannot be discussed here. What interests us is that Hegel's conception says that asymmetrical social relations only persist because they are localised in the interior of the participating consciousnesses. They are not simply founded on external compulsion applied to what are inherently equal self-consciousnesses, but are also rooted in the respective consciousnesses' views of their own value, in each specific self-consciousness developing the objective consciousness appropriate to it. If the consciousness changes, then the external compulsion to which it previously submitted will not long persist and it is in this sense that for Hegel, in contrast to Marx, *consciousness* certainly does determine being, not the other way round. In Hegel's account this immediately becomes obvious not to the lord, but to the serf. The lord is the one who is the immediately free and sovereign self-consciousness, which, one could say, understands itself as the midpoint of the world, while the serf is only a means for him to maintain precisely this self-understanding. The lord goes on desiring the things, but he does not have to make any effort to provide himself with them, because the serf does that for him. The serf is just the dependent extension of the will of the lord without a will of his own and while the lord has the desire and its satisfaction, the part in all this that falls to the serf is the *labour*, the work on the object. The serf determined himself as existing but not autonomous consciousness, not as consciousness existing for itself, so his world is now one of existing things that he, denying his own desires, prepares for the benefit of alien desires. "Labour . . . is *suppressed* desire", says Hegel, but, and herein lies its dialectic, it also "constructively forms" (GW IX, 115; Miller ¶ 195). In his labour the serf experiences his power over the object which he does not immediately enjoy, but experiences it in its own objectivity. He comprehends that the external object is not alien to him, but something that he can see through. This knowledge, forced upon him by "the discipline of service and obedience" (ibid.) sets him internally free so that one can say that the serf gets his self-consciousness back from the side of being. The first expression of this freedom that still "stands within serfdom" (GW IX, 116; Miller ¶ 196) is the *obstinate self-will* of the serf deriving from the consciousness of

no longer being bound to the things, no longer really being no more than self-employed existence.

In this initially inner liberation oriented to the objective and mediated by the object, the serf has become *thinking* self-consciousness. In contrast to the lord, he is not only an abstract I with abstract autonomy, but an “I that also has the significance of the *being-in-itself*, of being the object to itself, which means it is capable of relating to the objective essence as the being-for-itself of the consciousness for which it exists” (GW IX, 116; Miller ¶ 197). This self-consciousness knows itself to be in possession of a thinking that immediately contains its objects and it asserts its freedom to lie in this possession. It has become, as Hegel says, “a stoic”, free in thought and imperturbably immersed in the essence of things “whether on the throne or in chains” (GW IX, 117; Miller ¶ 199)—the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius and the slave Epictetus come to mind. This position of consciousness is that of the understanding and its relation to the first extrasensory world, only now the focus has shifted to the practical side of this consciousness, to its potential for freedom. The freedom of the stoic is abstract; it consists in the fact of being able to abstract from life and to elevate itself to formal ‘rationality’.

Letting the object disappear, *sceptical* self-consciousness represents a very different, if no less serious, approach to freedom of thought. Radical scepticism is the negation of objectivity altogether or the demonstration of the finitude of the thinking that promises to be objectively fulfilled. We discussed in the section above on the *Scepticism* essay that Hegel sees far more than an incidental cathartic effect in philosophical scepticism; he assigns a chastening, purifying function to it. Again here, the *Phenomenology* speaks of the “dialectical movement” that scepticism brings into the concepts, even if this does not make it a really content-laden thinking. Scepticism allows itself the freedom to bring out the contradiction in everything that anyone ever says, to smother everything with irony like the review sections of the newspapers and in every case to have a different, contrary opinion. A self-contradictory consciousness, ultimately scepticism despairs of reason. Hegel likens it to “the bickering of obstinate boys, one of whom says A when the other says B and then says B when the other says A and who pay for the pleasure of remaining in contradiction with each other by contradicting *themselves*” (GW IX, 121; Miller ¶ 205). This makes it a consciousness that is its own lord and serf at the same time, a mind at odds with itself, quite literally an unhappy consciousness. This last *unhappy consciousness* concluding the passage through the patterns of self-consciousness thus has two souls in the same breast and nothing else beside the two laws determining it but its subjective inability to bring the two together. Now, this unhappy consciousness does have a concept of reconciliation, that is of a

totality into which its antinomical structure would be overcome. But without becoming a spirited consciousness, a spirited mind, it can only imagine this reconciliation as something that happens outside it. This is the point where, finally despairing of its initial self-understanding as the truth of the object, self-consciousness returns to the *object* as its truth. The object that is supposed to save this mind at odds with itself is no mere objective object, but a self external to it, an infinite object. Unhappy consciousness longs for the absolute self into which both sides of the subject-object opposition are overcome, which is precisely what makes it the anticipation of *reason*.

Reason sets the value of truth neither one-sidedly in the object nor one-sidedly in the subject, but, in the spirit of the simultaneity thesis of the *Preface*, in the midpoint of both, in the concrete determination in which both are there *for each other*. Reason is “the certainty of being all truth” (GW IX, 132; Miller ¶ 231), which means it is the agreement between objective truth and subjective certainty. In principle reason is not set the task of looking for the truth; rather the truth is present just as that which is rational is always supposed to be present too. Rational thinking is an in principle affirmative thinking, which does not have to get over this or that obstacle in order to arrive at itself. Still it is immediately present first as an anticipation of its full content, more a kind of trust in the great justice of all things than already given as a specific knowledge of them. This is why the certainty of reason is initially an “idealism” offering assurances rather than proof. It is the confidence that I am not really a foreigner among my own kind and in the world, but that I can recognise myself in the others. Reason’s midpoint is, as we said, determined neither by the subject nor by the object, instead it is the *category*, the concept in which both sides are concretely equivalent to each other. Hegel is thinking here especially of the Kantian and the Fichtean concept of category, but at the same time he has his own category concept too. He writes:

The I is now . . . only the *pure essence* of being or the simple *category*. The *category* was formerly the essence of being *without distinguishing* between being in general and being as opposed to consciousness, but now it is *essence* as the simple unity of being only as thinking actuality; this means that the category encapsulates the fact that self-consciousness and being are *the same* essence; the same not by comparison, but in and for themselves. (GW IX, 134; Miller ¶ 235)

Within reason, *in themselves* and simply as such, thinking and being are the same and the specific expression of this (again Parmenidean) indistinguishable sameness of subjective and objective reason is the category.

Since reason contains in equal measure the theoretical impulse of consciousness and the practical impulse of self-consciousness, the ideal of truth and that of freedom, it emerges as theoretical and practical reason, just as it did for Kant. The specific goal of theoretical, observing reason as well as that of practical reason, the reason realising itself in freedom, is to find or to represent the respective subject-object synthesis, hence the equation of reason is basically “the world is the I and the I is the world”. The first part of the equation, the identification of world and I, refers theoretical reason particularly to the organic, the living world. The understanding, as we saw at the end of the section on consciousness, does not manage to encompass life. Life showed with the second extrasensory world that grasping its essence exceeds the powers of the understanding. Reason, in contrast, is immediately affine to life; teleological thinking after all is not really an objective, but a *reflexive* kind of thinking and consequently belongs to reason not to the understanding. Observing reason thus sets out to find the world that is I, the body of the I. In the realm of the organic it encounters individuality and in self-consciousness, which it also observes, it encounters itself. Now the individuation of the self runs into limits. Attempts to get a grip on the self or the I and to naturalise it, for instance to identify it with the brain, to find it in physiognomy, or in phrenology as the study of the bone form of the skull, all immediately contradict reason itself, which is not a thing. We have here in principle the problem of Kant’s third antinomy, the antinomy of determination by nature versus that by freedom; there too the search for the I in the world failed. Reason now turns to the practical side, to the I that expresses itself by constructing a world, to the I that is itself a world. The self-positioning of reason turning to practice and realising itself in the world can take various forms. Reason can more or less oppose the world, it can more or less identify itself with the world, or it can, as happens in the section “Animal kingdom of spirit and deception”, declare itself to be a self-satisfied, complete world. This latter option explains why the monadic, self-referential existence of the “I that is a world” no longer really communicates with the other worlds of other I’s and why it misses the identity of reason, which is still oriented to a common world of all I’s. It also explains the designation “animal kingdom”, which refers to a realm of beings closed off in themselves and only apparently for each other and addressing real things; hence also the reference in this title to “deception”. The response to this autistic version of the identity of self and world is given by the next section, by “law-making” reason, which pursues the constitution of a decidedly universal and common world by checking the reasonableness of maxims of behaviour against their capacity for universalisation. Obviously Hegel has Kant’s practical reason in mind here and the chapter contains several critical observations on

Kant's doctrine of the categorical imperative. This section together with the concluding part of the chapter on "reason scrutinising law" leads to the result we can briefly state here that the postulate of the equality of I and world cannot be fulfilled by a purely monologic or solipsist reason. On the other hand the postulate is already fulfilled if the I has a common world with other I's right from the start, that is on the ground of spirit, on the foundation of the life of the I's as members of a supra-individual whole. At this point, where, as we recall, a new cycle begins in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel introduces the insights that take him beyond the framework of Kant and Fichte's subjective idealism.

## 5 Spirit Arrives at Absolute Knowing

Hegel calls spirit "the self-sustaining, absolute, real essence" (GW IX, 239; Miller ¶ 440); all previous patterns of consciousness were, as he goes on to say, merely "abstractions" of this. Spirit designates an original structure of totality initially present as an objectively supra-individual power only gradually acquiring for itself an explicit self-consciousness, which is to say that it only gradually presents itself as knowledge. This objectively supra-individual character of spirit is clearly far less of a mystery than one might at first think; anyone who uses the term *zeitgeist*—spirit of the age, for instance, has in mind a structure of images and motivations of essentially anonymous character and commitment to which subjects submit themselves (when it comes down to it) more or less blindly, without any awareness of being compelled to do so. This is a central component of supra-individual systems like cultures, languages or historical periods. Cultural and historical assumptions taken for granted as self-evident do not function by someone setting standards for the others, which the others then somehow accept and follow. Fundamental cultural and historical orientations function—to use one of Hegel's own expressions—rather like 'infections' (cf. GW IX, 276, 295, 380; Miller ¶ 508, ¶ 545, ¶ 710) of, as we said, anonymous commitments. Only subjective thinking asks here after the 'culprit'; it asks the question, who in each case it 'was' assuming that the assertion of something collectively self-evident is a subjective act. But who could have caused medieval Europe suddenly to start building in Gothic style and actually to feel this way? Who gets the blame for the fact that in the eighteenth century the Enlightenment became a historical force? Who laid down the laws of Latin grammar? Who caused and directed the mutation of Latin into Italian grammar? To all these questions the only possible answer is: *no-one*, that is no specific subject; instead it was the *system* of the subjects itself that became in one way or another concrete. Hegel's concept of the "world-historical individual"

is in no sense that of a single individual, who succeeds against all the other individuals in 'making' *history*. Hegel always insists that his concept of practice is grounded in the interplay between I and world and never means manipulating the world in the subjective sense. No-one 'makes' history in that sense as a mere subject; it would be truer to say that history makes itself and is conceived by Hegel as a self-relation of objective spirit as a reflexively structured supra-individual event. The world-historical individual (we referred above to Napoleon as Hegel's contemporary illustration) is just the individual in whom self-generative history becomes concrete all the way down to the 'decisive' details. It is an individual whose own consciousness corresponds in the decisive moment, in the moment of decision, with the reversal in the system of subjects, the totality of objective spirit. It was not any of his own subjective assets that made Napoleon for Hegel "this world-soul"; rather it was because for his time he became what one could call the seeing eye of objective spirit, the focal point of the latter's own on-going restructuring. This is the sense in which Hegel speaks of "world-historical individuals" and "historical men" in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* as the "executors of the world spirit"; they are never "happy" in the trivial sense of a self-satisfied autonomy and when their "goal is reached, they fall to the ground, the empty shell of the seed".<sup>24</sup> The 'historicity' of existence, of which so much has been said in the twentieth century and so much of that merely edifying, is not nearly as harmless as, among others, historicism claims it is. Hegel saw in it rather the law of alienation, the logic of the tragic aspect of subjectivity, of the sacrifice of subjectivity.

Back to the *Phenomenology*. With the concept of spirit human beings (as we know at the latest from 'self-consciousness') never begin in abstract isolation, neither as already complete subjects nor as single agents struggling for the success of their interests with other single agents. Instead they are always *decentred* subjects, each is a subject whose being lies outside of it in a supra-individual system. The supra-individual system is the *substance* of the subject on which it relies unconditionally and from which it derives its knowledge of particular values and goals. As we have seen in our discussion of the *Natural law* essay, Hegel speaks of "substantial ethical life" as an ethical orientation that is not promulgated by some authority, not simply made or negotiated, but as something in which subjects as members of one and the same ethical world have their common origin. The model that emerged in the modern period with a *social contract* as the origin of the socialisation of individuals assumes isolated atomic subjects, who, tired of the war of all against all, unify them-

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24 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, TW 12, 46 f. Cf. e.g. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, 1975, p. 84.

selves into a social structure that lets them be more than isolated atoms. Hegel regarded this conception as misguided, which to be fair was constructed to explain existing arrangements in supra-individual communities, in societies. As little as individuals somehow devoid of language can decide to speak from a specific date a language they invent together, no more can subjects initially and inherently devoid of relations decide to become members of a common world of their construction. The whole is more than the sum of its parts and the parts are not arbitrarily susceptible to combination into a whole; life is not composed of living things, but precedes them.

It is in this sense of what Hegel calls substantial ethical life, the *ethos as such*, that *spirit* lies in waiting for the individual. In the context of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, substantial ethical life is also an answer to Kant's practical reason, which itself sought to found a common world for all subjects. But the subject cannot simply expand itself into a whole world without falling back onto the standpoint of abstract self-consciousness. In Hegel's substantial ethical life the subject is not the ground of morality, but it is already itself encompassed by the dominant ethos. The ethos dominates on the first level of spirit with complete immediacy, utterly unquestioned. Spirit, however, is quite naturally constantly being reflected in the consciousness of the individuals—just as the language is not statically common to a given community of human beings, but is a kind of togetherness that passes through all its users' consciousnesses updating itself constantly. This means that what is in spirit *in itself* must become *for us*, which in this case means that the ethos divides itself into two distinct and divergent systems of laws and values. Hegel speaks of the "divine" and the "human" law, one system more eccentric, substantial and one more subjective, centred. This opposition is exemplified above all by the *family*, which in its principle is ahistorical, prior to the state, and which cannot even be grasped by the state. It stands against the subjectively mediated, historically variable *political system*. Hegel discusses the *Antigone* of Sophocles focussing in this tragedy on the conflict between the two sides, in which the woman, Antigone, represents the divine law, the timeless, substantial ethos, while the man, Creon, represents human law, i.e. that of the historically mediated system and its institutionalised ethos. Here the two faces of the immediate ethos are represented as ideal types of the genders, and these assignments might suggest a comparison with the idealisation of the feminine as that "centre and quiescent point of the otherwise endlessly fragmented and conflicted animal existence", in the words of Georg Friedrich Daumer,<sup>25</sup> whom we encountered

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25 G.F. Daumer, *Das Christentum in seinem Verhältnisse zum weiblichen Geschlecht*—Christianity and its relation to the female sex, in *Pan und Madonna. Ausgewählte Schriften*—Pan and Madonna, selected writings, ed. K. Kluncker, Bonn 1988, p. 67.

above as, in his day, one of Hegel's best known students and who was also well-known for having been entrusted with the education of Kaspar Hauser. Another association might be Bachofen's theory of matriarchy, but these references cannot be pursued here. Recalling the language of the *System of Ethical Life*, the woman embodies the intuitive ethos (i.e. being, the ethical *is*), and the man the intended ethos (i.e. thought, the ethical *ought*), and "absolute ethical life" cannot be attained as long as these two are not identical. Here then the first level of ethical life leads to the tragic struggle of its two principles in which each is guilty of transgressing against the other's law. What emerges from the tragic conflict is the consciousness of *subjectivity*, of the relative isolation of consciousness in opposition to its world. Consciousness is now no longer a generic representative of the one or the other ethical power, no longer a man or a woman, but a person as such, an individual, and in this singularity immediately also what the counterpart is, thus also a universal. That which consists of persons, however, is no longer substantial ethical life, but the state of law already reflecting the personal relation—historically speaking Rome has taken the place of Greece as a system in which there are no longer any genuinely tragic conflicts any more, but at most only the question, who among all persons sets himself at the pinnacle of the system, of the world, essentially more or less arbitrarily? Inherent to this personalisation rendering spirit subjective is once again an enormous alienation from the world that tears the totality of living relations apart. The consciousness which in this context assumes the form of the unhappy consciousness, just as stoicism corresponds to the Roman state of law, is structurally "the spirit alienated from itself", one that has its truth in an external actuality to which it tries to conform. In the section of the chapter on spirit entitled "Culture and its Realm of Actuality" Hegel encompasses the entire dualistic spirituality of the Christian medieval period, the world of faith, which only becomes a world of faith by inserting mediating authorities between itself and the true world in place of a real grounding in living spiritual presence. These mediating authorities can include the saints and the various religious relics all the way back to the grave of Jesus, the fight for which, against all political reason, long seemed worth it; the church itself as a holy sanctum and dispenser of grace also comes to mind. It was the Reformation that finally did away with all these objective mediators in favour of the one personal mediator, Jesus Christ. The Enlightenment was abstract and unjust in its attack on faith because it only saw its banal external aspects, but it successfully claimed that there is really nothing to that duality and alienation and that the spirit is directly accessible to itself and that this is perfectly possible for the subject itself. Enlightenment, however, is not only a theoretical monism, but also a practical philosophy of identity, which is to say that it eliminates what

is divergent and immediately different. In the section “Absolute Freedom and the Terror” we see the principle of identity of the Enlightenment, the ‘common will’—Rousseau’s *volonté générale*—that knows itself, or at least claims to do so, realising itself through the guillotine of the French Revolution. The guillotine is the postulate that all external existence should have *equal validity*, all of it in that sense *indifferent*. As such it corresponds to the spirit certain of itself as *conscience*, the concluding phase of the spirit chapter. For conscience too the externals have no significance, for the external world has been completely overcome into the I. But then conscience does want to find itself, if not in indifferent externals, at least in another conscience, so it builds ‘communities’ of the faithful and a general moral world view. This in a certain sense brings us back to the monadic form of existence of the animal kingdom of spirit, only now conscience is and represents spirit, which extends beyond the I into an external, *supra-individual* structure. This insight of Hegel’s, which sees conscience not simply as an anthropological constant nor as socially acquired, but as the pinnacle of intensification of a totality of spirit, is of the greatest significance and is applied in many ways. The logic of conscience itself implies the existence of *consciences*, of the one and the other conscience. Again we have a disjunction, like that at the beginning of the self-consciousness chapter, of the whole into two mutually and unconditionally repelling spheres and the struggle over precedence is so bitter because they rest on foundations of ‘inherently’ equal validity. Now only one can be the “good conscience” and it is just as clear that each holds itself for the good and the other for the bad conscience. Only the knowledge that the one is as good as the other and that both are spirit of the same objective spirit allows them to coexist together. They enter into a “mutual recognition” by acknowledging that it is the same spirit dividing itself into the disjunction within both and conceding individual existence to each, and for Hegel this mutual recognition amounts to the actuality of something more than objective spirit, in fact it is immediately “*absolute spirit*”, the spirit of lived reconciliation (GW IX, 361; Miller ¶ 670).

Absolute spirit as such is content, object and ground of *religion*. Religion thus represents the final *turning point* in the full development of knowledge, for religion gives us the conscious self-relation of spirit as spirit. It does that first as the relation of a still external self to spirit established as subject and essence and then as spirit’s actual knowledge of itself in its spirituality, in its power to re-absorb all merely immediate objective difference. Crucial to Hegel’s conception of religion is first its ability to bring totality into the present, which already lends it a logical character, and beyond that its function of integrating the various structures of knowledge we have run through in the *Phenomenology*. Religious consciousness and knowledge both emerge as

simultaneously consciousness and self-consciousness, reflecting objective spirit as well as absolute spirit and this precisely is its own way of grounding all the modes of consciousness in the knowledge of totality—the great exception, of course, is reason, which falls outside the frame because it takes itself immediately to be totality, which is what makes it as much a- or irreligious just as it is essentially ahistorical. Religion “bundles” (cf. GW IX, 366 f.) the other patterns of consciousness at least demonstrating that it constitutes the continuum bearing the shifts through the various patterns. The existence of *different* religions is for Hegel not an objection to this function; it rather gives rise to the question, in what way does religious knowledge, which is always historical too, in fact *absolutely* express the absolute. Hegel pursues this issue later in the philosophy of religion.

The real step to the absolutely known absolute comes in the *Phenomenology's* concluding form of spirit, in absolute knowing. The foundation for this step lies in the insight into the essence of spirit gained on religion's pathway to realisation, namely that the essence of spirit is *clarity, self-revelation as such*. With spirit as such religion has the absolute self, pure and total mediation, for its object, but then here clearly “object” can no longer be taken in the narrow sense as simply the other of consciousness. Religion is after all about overcoming objective limits, the elimination of limitations on the self, the integration of everything possessing “selfness” thus liberated into “being itself” as a reflexive totality. This elimination of limitations in religion is quite different from that in philosophy, for in religion it happens in the medium of representations, of images, initially at least in the form of immediate appearance. The levels of religion designate just as many areas from which the image substrates and image immediacies are taken. First comes immediately formed and self-forming *nature*, starting with *light*; the awakening of subjectivity comes in the *work*, in whose production the human being directly participates, that is the *artwork*; and finally we have *revelation*, Christianity, the absolute religion whose God, according to Hegel, is neither a natural object nor a work of art, but *logos*. Both subjective and objective selves participate immediately in each other within the logos, which is thus the real concrete fulfilment of the postulates of reason and of Parmenides' identity of being and thinking as it has emerged from the standpoint of spirit.

*Absolute knowing*, in contrast, is now the transformation of what is absolutely known into the (self-)conscious and self-certain form of the performance of this knowing. In absolute knowing truth should be certain, i.e. thoroughly mediated, not merely imagined or believed as in religion. It is about being able oneself actually to be absolutely certain about the absolute, about the genuine production of the self-consciousness of spirit—not in the sense of those

practical and struggling forms of self-consciousness long since overcome in the course of the *Phenomenology*, but in the sense of the ultimate and vital reminder that what we have in knowledge is not facts, not bits and pieces of knowledge, but cognition itself, that we are knowing as such. This directly implies that revelation is not something that happens to us, but that we exist as revelation in the meeting points, intersections, overlaps and interpenetrations of being and thought, substance and subject. In the sense of absolute knowing, which is not a cognition of something but the knowledge of knowledge itself, we are integrated into “the knowledge of the I = I”; we are now “this single self, that is immediately pure knowing or the universal” (GW IX, 425; Miller ¶ 793). We now know an absoluteness all our own, irreplaceable and irremovable, not an absoluteness of quantity, but one that is purely qualitative. In terms of method, knowledge has become completely reflexive in that it has reabsorbed everything that was opaque, external, or alien to it, turning it into a moment of itself. The statement that there exists nothing that is not knowledge only sounds confusing as long as “knowledge” is taken as a subjective performance, as an act in relation to the midpoint, the *medius terminus*, appearance. But in truth we have just returned back to the midpoint of that revelation from which appearance gets its appearing, its light and its glow, its ‘shine’. We have returned to a truth that is nothing other than living self-relation, the original relation of things. This “truth is [now] not only in itself completely identical to certainty, it also has the structure of self-certainty, or it is in its existence, i.e. for knowing spirit, in the form of knowledge of itself” (GW IX, 427; Miller ¶ 798). It is now the “concept that knows itself as concept” (GW IX, 429; Miller ¶ 801). This status is that of immediately and completely reflexive knowledge as well as in principle that of the overcoming of the simple opposition of consciousness and as such it constitutes the ground of logical science.

The external precondition for this is that the “world spirit” (cf. GW IX, 430; Miller ¶ 802) has come to itself, the elimination of the apparently irreducibly objective difference of its moments distributed through time into the single anamnestic concept of totality, the “*Insichgehen*—going into itself” or “*Er-Innerung*—remembering or internalising” by the spirit in the double rhythm of the “form of contingency of appearing existence”, i.e. history, and of the “conceptually comprehended organisation”, i.e. the “science of appearing knowledge” (GW IX, 433 f.; Miller ¶ 808). At this point the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ends after—which was, of course, its initial and final goal—having specified the aspects under which what is not yet known can be turned into knowing. The reference to “*Er-Innerung*” is key here and Hegel hopes to have contributed to it in the confidence that its systematic treatment would follow in the subsequent development of philosophy.

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## The Realm of the Concept—*Science of Logic*

### 1 Centre of the System

Hegel's *Science of Logic* can justifiably be called our philosopher's real *opus magnum*. This is the book in which Hegel invested his entire philosophical energy and it constitutes the standard against which everything else Hegel had to say must be measured—an *opus* then, it is fair to say, without which the rest of our philosopher's work cannot be understood. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel unfolds the world of "objective thinking" (GW XXI, 34; Miller 49), the cosmos of the terms of thought, the "realm of thought" purely and simply "in its own immanent activity" (GW XXI, 10; Miller 31). Thought becomes its own object of interest, here thoughts are *thought* not just *used*; the determinations, or terms, of thought really are self-determinations of thinking, not imposed or determined by someone or something else, neither are they tools to think about something else that is not itself thought. Thought here is simultaneously form and content, which is what gives it an absolute significance, not merely a relative one bound to some kind of extra-logical material with which thought has to struggle as with something quite foreign to it. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* dealt with the structures of concrete knowing, in which consciousness had knowledge of itself, of its world and of the relative unity of the two specific to the given structure. Concrete knowing in the phenomenological sense is a kind of cognition that thinks about *something other* than thought, which is why its own thoughts can never be exhaustively *filled* with content. Concrete knowing in the sense of the *Phenomenology* as a cognition of appearances is itself an appearance, not an essential, self-sustaining form of knowledge. It only reaches that stage, as we have seen, in the final stage of "absolute knowing", that structure of cognition which is purely reflexive and no longer objective, no longer alienated and interrupted, refracted or subservient to an alien law.

Absolute knowing is the *truth* of all modes of consciousness, because the path through the *Phenomenology* produced the result that only in absolute knowing has the partition of *object* and *self-certainty* completely dissolved so that truth has become identical to this certainty and this certainty identical to the truth. (GW XXI, 33; Miller 49)

Measured against the other patterns of concrete cognition developed in the *Phenomenology*, absolute knowing seems to be a completely empty form; it is pure knowing as such or the immediate 'light of reason'. Nothing is seen in this light, at first at least, especially coming directly from the glittering realm of appearing knowledge, the knowledge of appearances, and all its colourful imagery. Natural consciousness with its appearing knowledge never looks directly into the light of reason, into the *logos* itself. It prefers images that reflect this light in their own specific refraction. Moreover, it instinctively shields itself with its object- or image-knowledge against non-objective and image-free cognition. As Plato said, no-one ever left the cave of natural consciousness of their own free will, no-one freely acknowledged that the shadows they saw in the cave actually were shadows, mere pictures and symbols of the logical realm outside the cave. Hegel sees the phenomenological cunning of reason, including the self-application of the externalisation schema of time, ensuring that what is different from thought is *er-innert*—remembered, internalised (what is "outside" is brought "inside"), so that the images are revealed as mere images and the symbols are finally deciphered. We have already seen that for Hegel the course of history is not somehow external to the course of reason, rather it generates those pivotal moments, those turning points in which philosophy too effects the change, the conversion to a new standpoint. Right at the start of the first preface to the *Science of Logic* in 1812 Hegel says that "over the last twenty-five years or so philosophical thinking" has "undergone" a "sea change" and the *Science of Logic* aims to draw the consequences of this transformation for the realm of the pure terms of thought; it seeks to give expression in its own way to the "higher standpoint that the self-consciousness of spirit has attained for itself in this time period" (GW XXI, 5; Miller 25). The new, higher standpoint is quite simply that thinking has in principle thrown off its servitude to the things, to external compulsions and purposes and has become *free* or pure *er-innerte, internalised* thinking. Especially since Kant and Fichte, thinking has in principle liberated itself to think itself. Yet no-one had taken up the challenge of systematically developing the thinking that thinks itself as such—not even Fichte, who, as we know from *Faith and Knowledge*, never completely let go of finite knowledge and finite consciousness. At last, then, the *Science of Logic* offers a school for the upright gait of the consciousness which no longer bows before the things. The fact should not confuse us that even after that epochal sea change in philosophical thinking most people, at least most of the time, do not think *thoughts*, but think *something else*. Still, it is enough to know that the tight linkage between consciousness and the things no longer has to be its fate. Participation in the free concept is now a real option for philosophy.

In the whole system the *Science of Logic* forms the first major part with the other two following under the rubric of *Realphilosophien*, the philosophies of nature and of spirit. They are called 'real' philosophies not because the *Logic* somehow lacks reality, which would mean it possessed no internal differences and determinations, but because they comprise what is extra-logical, what on the whole is understood in contrast to logic. Nature is immediately extrinsic to logic, although when it becomes *specific*, then logic is the fundamental assumption required in order to *understand* it. Nature is an external reality, which means it is something determinate that does not account for its determination purely on its own or by itself. Neither is spirit simply thought thinking and fulfilling itself, for it too contains a moment of externality distinct from thought; the spoken word is not only intelligible meaning, but also physical sound articulation, an event in space and time. These 'real' philosophies thus give logic concrete form in what is not immediately logical and this is the sense in which one can say that they do realise logic as logic. It is important to note, however, that they do not expand the range of logic thereby in any way. In the *Introduction* Hegel calls the *Logic* "the system of pure reason" or the realm of "truth as it is without covering in and for itself", indeed he describes it emphatically as "*the presentation of God . . . , as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite spirit*" (GW XXI, 34; Miller 50). Nothing is added to God in his concept by the creation of nature and a finite spirit and essentially nothing more emerges than what was already there before the creation. Reason as reason does not become more rational by having to deal with finite reason; reason remains its own inner standard as well as that of its other, even of its opposite.

A few remarks now on the structure of Hegel's logic concerning only what is most necessary ahead of the detailed discussion. The *Science of Logic* is both two- and three-part. As two parts it breaks down into what Hegel calls "objective" and "subjective" logics. The "objective logic" handles the terms of thought in which in its form thinking is *by its other*, while in the "subjective logic" thinking is formally *by itself*. Objective terms of thought are, for instance, being, number, a law of thought like the principle of identity, or the relation of causality; subjective terms in contrast are those which express themselves immediately as being thought or actualities of thought such as the concept, the judgment or the idea. The objective logic comprises thought forms in which Kant, as well as the ontology preceding him, found the fundamental categories or forms of objective determination; while in the subjective logic we find traditional terms of logic that go all the way back to Aristotle. For Hegel's conception of logic on the whole, however, even the objective terms of thought are in truth also subjective, just as conversely the subjective terms are not merely forms of

thought, but constituents of logical objectivity as such. The logical standpoint as a whole is *neither* objective nor subjective, but one that is in the sense of absolute knowing itself *absolute*, in which knowing itself explains itself all by itself. The pathway of the logic is one of working out this inner absoluteness in the determination in each term of thought itself—more than that will not be said here because anticipations of this kind without the material itself tend to be colourless and rarely ever amount to more than assurances.

The *Science of Logic* has three parts or “books”. The first of them is the *Doctrine of Being*, which first appeared in 1812 and then was revised and extended by Hegel shortly before his death, the second edition appearing in 1832.<sup>1</sup> The second book is the *Doctrine of Essence*, which appeared in 1813, and finally the third is the *Doctrine of the Concept* of 1816. Simply put, the logic of being contains those terms in which thinking has immediately forgotten itself to the utmost extent that such a thing is possible; in the logic of essence it is already present (to itself) in the form of reflection, but still in the objective and binding sense of this reflection. Only the logic of the concept, the inner telos of the whole work, develops genuinely free and self-conscious thinking. The logic of being and that of essence constitute together the first volume, the objective logic, while the book on the concept contains the subjective logic. One can perhaps clarify the sequence of logical statuses or ranks—for that is what is important in both divisions into two and into three parts—with the following example. A book is, or is certainly supposed to be, a production of the mind and as such should form a logical unity and be susceptible to logical penetration. In terms of the logic of being the book is not a *conceptual* unity, but the unity of a *something*, which, for whatever reason, is there before me, distinguishing itself from other somethings, e.g. the teacup I place on top of it. In this view it has definite qualities, not now literary, but a colour on the outside, while inside it is patterned in black and it is, as we said, hard enough to put a teacup on it. Moreover, it can be quantitatively determined; it can be weighed so we can distinguish heavier from lighter books. We can also count the pages, so we can differentiate between a master’s and a doctoral dissertation. Being does not get us any further and so Hegel says in the *Encyclopaedia*, “Being is the concept only *in itself*; its terms are *beings* and their difference is that of *others* opposed to each other”.<sup>2</sup> Nobody is hindered from regarding not only books but the whole world, including his own person, in these terms of

1 In the GW edition volume XI contains the logic of being of 1812 together with the logic of essence of 1813, while volume XXI is the (of course ultimately authoritative) second edition of the logic of being of 1832.

2 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 84.

the logic of being. Reification is indeed a popular orientation to logic, which is true not only for outmoded metaphysical standpoints that regard, for instance, the soul or the human self as a thing, but also for highly up-to-date forms of positivism—from the identification of the self with the brain to the reduction of reason as the nature of man to a measurable IQ or of the question of truth to the counting of votes. Nobody is hindered from relating to his world and to himself in this manner, but *reason* on its pathway to itself cannot stand still at these forms of categorising the world.

With the concept of essence we recognise that the true meaning of what is immediate does not consist in those parts or aspects of it that can be immediately determined for certain in terms of the logic of being. The immediate is recognised as being something mediated, as the appearance of another to which it stands in an essential relation. The book has its meaning now not in serving as a saucer for the teacup or simply being thick and heavy, but in being exchangeable for something else, to be capable of standing ‘for’ something else. For instance, it has a monetary value, an immediate one at that, in which it is directly commensurable with other things via their monetary values. Contrasting sharply with the tangible grasp of the logician of being, this position reaches beyond the book into what is essential, to the money, say, so that this beautiful idealism provides, in this case, the foundation for the publishing industry. Let us leave the book trade aside, there are other objective relations in which the book emerges as “immediacy overcome”. It is for example the foundation of a career as a teacher; the one refers to the other and the idealism we have here says that the person in question is not this given individual, but essentially the writer of this or that book, just as this book is essentially not a thing, but the credential for a real or supposed expertise. One could even go so far as to say that, as a widespread, if false, prejudice has it, writing a book can give rise to great effects so that the book enters into a causal relation and changes the world. Here the book is a ‘factor’ in the social system and in the worst case there are actually authors happy with the role of being a cause or a factor. Here again anyone can explain the world to himself in the sense of the position of essence and essential relations of exchange, such as the capitalist, the socialist or the systems theory fan, all of whom let the ontically immediate disappear into mediation without, of course, reaching self-explanatory reason, better known as the concept.

It will be clear now how our example looks on the level of the subjective logic. Here we have the book that has been understood and intellectually appropriated, opening itself up to me as I open myself up to it. This is the book as something with which a living exchange and a genuinely intellectual relationship is possible. ‘In itself’ then the book, when it was a thing and a product, was just waiting to be known or *recognised* in the real sense of the

term. It was, as is now clear, never its own telos to bear the teacup or to fill the cash registers and the decisive point is: it would never even *exist* as a physical object and as a metaphysical object of exchange without its *ultimate purpose* of revealing itself conceptually, as logos. Submerging the idea in the ontic and the symbolic, anaesthetising the concept in objectivity and functionality should not make us overlook the fact that these are all just moments of the process of the concept coming to itself, of the fulfilment of its meaning and purpose. Clearly our example is not sufficient in every respect to illustrate the sequence of logical statuses structuring Hegel's *Science of Logic*; but it should be clear that it would be easy to give other examples for other aspects of this sequence. Indeed, the differences, to remain with the books for just a moment, between a telephone book, a statute book and a book like the *Science of Logic* can also represent this sequence and our relationship to these different books differs in exactly the same way. The telephone book is not supposed to offer us anything other than a collection of facts according to their being; the statute book turns us away from itself to an actual reality that is simultaneously reflected in it and determined by it, of which it is a part, but which it is ultimately supposed to serve; the philosophical or literary text then is the place where the spirit really lives and is by itself, where it pursues no secondary purposes and so can develop itself fully. Examples, no matter how good, always run out somewhere revealing their inadequacy; but the distinct facets of our example of the book may serve for a first perspective on the fundamental positions we will be running through in Hegel's *Logic*.

One final observation for orientation on the specific programme Hegel pursues in this work is appropriate here, for it constitutes a most important distinguishing feature of the *Science of Logic*. Hegel's purpose is to think through the logical genesis of these terms of thought and to determine exactly how they become what they are. They do not constitute a set of distinct forms which are simply found in this distinctness as their final pitch behind which it is not possible to go any further; that is what characterises "natural" but not philosophical consciousness. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant gives a table of twelve categories in analogy to the table of judgments preceding it, this second one being the table of those moments, the so-called categories, capable of logically forming a judgment. The categories supposedly underlie all synthetic formation of the material of experience acquired from perception into objective determination. Kant claimed that this table is complete and that the proof for its completeness is easy to give.<sup>3</sup> Since he did not provide the proof himself, this has opened a wide field for the efforts of Kant's interpreters either to supply

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3 Cf. Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*—Metaphysical starting grounds for natural science, AA IV, 475 Remark.

what Kant did not or to show that Kant's claim of completeness was for one reason or another false. Here we are only interested in the fact that with the ordering of his categories in groups of three, Kant himself took the first steps towards a systematic approach going beyond a simple collection of terms of thought that are somehow simply available. Kant does not develop, in Hegel's sense, the individual categories from out of each other, but he certainly does notice that the terms grouped under a given title do build upon one another and, one could say, that they fill out a 'metacategorical' fundamental structure which is repeated under each of the titles of the table of categories. Thus, for example, we find under the title 'quantity' the category *unity* (*Einheit*) listed as necessarily the first because all other terms of quantity presuppose it while it, conversely, does not presuppose any of them. *Plurality* (*Vielheit*), the second category of quantity, can only be thought when *unity* is already given in thought. The many definite numbers agree in presupposing the *one* and with it *oneness, unity*; this means that each well-defined concept of a specific number, of a definite or distinct *one*, i.e. of a *plurality*, analytically requires the presupposition of *unity*, while it is not the case conversely that the concept of *one* analytically presupposes 'two' or any other definite number. *Totality* (*Allheit*) finally, Kant's third category of quantity is the synthesis of unity and plurality; in totality the *plurality* is thought of as a *unity* and this is precisely the synthesis fully representing the title 'quantity'. Kant speaks in his *Logic* and in similar terms in the introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* of a "division deriving from the *principle of synthesis a priori*" as we have it here in the table of categories under each of the four titles.<sup>4</sup> The three moments relate to each other according to the schema of the *condition*, the *conditioned* and the *derivation of the conditioned term from the condition*. Quantitative *unity* would be the condition of the discourse of quantity, *plurality* the term standing under this condition, and *totality* the concept of a *plurality* as conditioned by *unity*. For us this is only a hint that there was the beginning of a relationship between the categories among themselves already in Kant, even if it must be admitted that a genuine development, that is one incorporating the *intensional* content of the categories, is clearly lacking. Kant chided Aristotle with selecting his ten categories "rhapsodically", that is without principle or any claim to being

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4 Kant, *Jäsche Logic* § 113, AA IX, 147 f., "The Jäsche Logic" in Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, transl. J. Michael Young, Cambridge 1992; cf. *Kritik der Urteilkraft* B LVII Remark in AA V, 197, Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, transl. Paul Guyer, Cambridge 2000. Both of these translations include the AA page numbers.—Hegel says more than once that it is "to the infinite credit of the Kantian philosophy" to have referred to "triplicity" as the "form of method" (GW XII, 247, Miller 837).

systematic.<sup>5</sup> While recognising Kant's progress to trichotomy as a structure, Hegel's complaint was that, with respect to the category table as a whole and, as we can add, with respect to the genetic presentation of the individual terms of thought, Kant never offered anything more than an "empirical" selection.<sup>6</sup> In view of the ontological consequences it is of the greatest significance not simply to give an inventory of the categories, but to conceive them as a *system* of terms of thought producing itself out of itself. We do not live in a world with *becoming* over here and *immediate existence* over there. We live in *one* world and can only think of this existence as something that has become what it is and becoming as releasing existence as such out of itself. Thinking this way presupposes that the categories are not simply ideal identities distinct from each other, but that in a perfectly comprehensible sense they form a logical continuum. Logical continuity of the categories here does not imply that each individual category for itself does not also constitute a definite logical standpoint quite different from its predecessor or successor; obviously, for Hegel too, it is not the same thing to consider being from the standpoint of quality and from that of quantity. The question is how do clearly distinct logical standpoints form a logical continuity? A serious question considering the fact that there is no external substrate, no 'true world' somehow already known to us and to which the logical forms relate merely externally, that would make comparison possible between a logical category's claim and a 'content' independent of it in order to assess the degree of accuracy or the relative deficiency of the claim. Here, however, logical categories have no content whatsoever independent of themselves. Everything that we might think of as content or 'reference' of the categories is itself thought of *in a definite logic*, i.e. according to the law of a logical form; moreover, the individual category itself is creator of its own content. The category is subject to no external criterion, but measures itself purely against itself or against that which is contained in its own determinate character. In the transition from one category to the next we cannot refer to anything at all that we already know of in some sense 'extracategorially' and which we regard as remaining the same in this transition. Such conditions obtain in the individual sciences, which verify their theoretical constructions against empirical referents and occasionally modify the underlying theory, not just the construction, by reference to such verifications or falsifications; but the knowledge of the special sciences is intentional, objective knowledge and not,

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5 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B 106, A 81.

6 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III, TW 20, 345 f.; cf. Haldane and Simson III, p. 438; "the first rational attempt in the world to derive the categories" was, according to Hegel, due to Fichte, TW 20, 401; cf. Haldane and Simson III, p. 493.

as in philosophy, reflexive knowledge. In reflexive knowledge thought is not merely the form of a content external to it as form, but is itself its own content. Logic is, as we have said, in this sense pre-eminently the ‘thinking of thoughts’ and given this meaning it cannot be corrected or modified by something that *per definitionem* is not itself a thought but, say, something empirically given. The logical process thus has to rely solely on itself, it is an autonomous process. How then do we proceed within this process from one term to another? How do the thoughts become ever more concrete, how do we proceed to the progressively more complex concept? We have already encountered some terms of the logic of being and their demonstration from each other gives us an excellent reference that has fundamental significance for Hegel’s concept of logic, so let us take a closer look at them now.

The categories in their process of becoming concrete are *applied to themselves*. This movement of self-application (and self-determination) is sometimes easier, sometimes harder to recognise; but it is the *structural law* of all logical progress, a law that is perfectly appropriate to the status of the terms of thought as patterns of reflexive knowing. All dialectic of categorial development is nothing other than the movement of the category towards adequacy to itself through the exhaustion of all its content by its at first merely immediate determination. If we exclude as a special case the starting categories *being* and *nothing*, then the first term obviously performing self-application is that of *becoming*. *Becoming* is, as we shall see, the set or posited unity of *being* and *nothing*, i.e. the transition from being into nothing and that from nothing into being grasped simultaneously as a *continuum*. Applying *becoming* to itself, having it determine itself, means letting this unity of transition itself enter into transition. So what does *becoming* become? If we set *becoming* in one of the moments that lie in it, formally as a *being*, then what *becoming* becomes in this case is a *nothing*, only now it is a concrete *nothing*, namely the *nothing of becoming*: non-becoming, immediate rest, stasis. The becoming of *becoming* in this respect is the opposite of becoming; Hegel speaks of the “vanishing of vanishing” (GW XXI, 93; Miller 106). Let us now turn to becoming as the other moment within it, formally a *nothing*, then that which *becoming* becomes in this case is a *being*, but now a concrete being, namely a being in which *becoming* is negated, i.e. it is a being that *has become*. Both terms, the negative one of the *cessation of becoming* and the positive one of *having become* together constitute the immediate definition of *Dasein*—qualitative or determinate being, the becoming which by itself sets itself *as overcome*. *Qualitative being* is no longer the bidirectional transiting unity of *being* and *nothing*, but an immediate unity of the two with the transition overcome, which in this case means negated and simultaneously preserved, i.e. remembered, internalised.

Qualitative being *is*, but as something that has become it also has a history, a past; it is, as Hegel says, being with determination.

This movement of the self-application of each thematic category can, as we have said, in principle be carried out for each term of thought. To take another example, in concrete qualitative being the demonstration that the category *something* is *otherness* shows that this holds not only externally, by comparison, but within *something* itself. *Something* as concrete qualitative being applied to itself then clearly cannot be said to be concrete in the sense of a being that is simply determinate, for now it varies making it indeterminate as *both* something *and* not something; as immediately broken in this way it shows itself to be immediately *finite*. *Finitude* is qualitative being defining itself from that which is different from it, from its *limitation*. Briefly put, the self-application of the category of the *finite* consists similarly in *limiting* the *limitation*, which already includes a removal of limitation. We will see that the first move in limiting the limitation lies in an *ought* defining itself from that which lies beyond the limitation taking it as a *barrier*, which means no longer as the definition, the *in-itself*, the telos of the finite. Its *in-itself* lies now outside the finite, at first however only in another finite which again must fall under the *ought*. In this sense then the first negation, the limitation, does not overcome the finite, but iterates it to infinity. The genuine cessation of limitation consists rather in taking it not as a positive qualitative being, but as a moment of the self-relation of finitude, which precisely in this respect—in terms of its limitation as moment and medium of its own selfness—is no longer finite. This movement reveals the affirmative infinity of self-relation, just as subjecting a life form to limitations is what enables it to acquire its own qualitative existence. The limit of the living thing is that it is just this or that and not the other, that the bird for example does not also have fins, horns and a trunk, all limitations on its qualitative, determinate being rendering it finite. The limit then, as a concrete condition of survival for the particular living being is precisely what makes this bird into a living thing in the first place, because it brings the infinity of life to appearance in this bird and lets its being *be*. Self-application here in the limitation of the positive limit also includes the concept of limitation as a location of self-relation just as self-relation includes the concept of the unlimited, the power over the limitation, which in principle has already set that limitation in *overcome* form. Any number of other examples could follow this one. Just two more, one from each of the other two books. The self-application of *identity*, the term of reflection from the book on essence, would mean *identifying identity*, but setting identity as identical is immediately its *differentiation*, for the identity set as identical is identity which *expressis verbis* is not different, i.e. different from what is different. Our last example is taken

from the concept book. *Conceptually comprehending the concept*, i.e. the self-application of the first term of the subjective logic, is already the *judgment*, in which of course one concept determines another or explains it.

These few examples hopefully give a taste of the structural law of Hegel's categorial progress that is supposed to unfold itself as an autonomous movement of reflexive knowing relying solely on itself. Self-application exhausts the potential of the thematic category making it the foundation for the succeeding category, which as the result of the motion of self-application is taken as immediate and in this form as the start of its own motion. The terminology Hegel uses for the status of a category as merely immediate or initially only named is *concept*. The construction of the relation to itself, which requires the category to distinguish itself from itself, is called its *realisation* in the sense of the development of its inner determination. The third moment finally, in which the category is completely related to itself by itself is its *totality*.<sup>7</sup> In totality the category reaches its complete content, its true meaning and has, as we can now say, become adequate to itself so that we can also call self-application the *principle of dialectical adequacy*. Hegel's theory of method has its proper place at the end of the *Logic*, so enough of methodological references here before we have even begun. Let us turn now to the first book of the *Science of Logic*.

## 2 Beginning with Being and through the Finite to Infinity

Before the beginning of his *Science of Logic* Hegel inserted an essay entitled "Where do we start in science?" The question reflects Hegel's methodological principle that philosophy must generate itself as the presuppositionless science of reflexive cognition. This means above all that no presuppositions should be made simply as starting points from which to proceed and which cannot themselves be overcome into and accounted for by knowing itself. Philosophy distinguishes itself in this respect decisively from the individual sciences as also from jurisprudence and theology. These last two have no problem where to begin, because they proceed from authorities, as a rule from existing texts accepted as authoritative. Neither do the natural and social sciences have this problem. They are constantly making assumptions they do not have to overcome. Entrance into a natural or social science is normally a process of connecting with the current level of research and the goal of the researcher is to develop that further in whatever way possible; so the level of research including the currently dominant methods is the authoritative material the

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7 Cf. Hegel already in Jena system draft II, GW VII, 113.

newcomer has to absorb and which he or she may not question without very strong immanent grounds. In philosophy the situation is fundamentally different. Philosophy recognises neither immediate nor mediate authorities, even if the philosophical tradition itself and the texts canonised by it do offer something of an authoritative orientation. In fact, this is true only for the individual entering the field, who may be brought to the right path or to a false one by such so-called authorities. None of that, neither the authorities nor the tradition, can offer the inner beginning for philosophy as science grounded in the subject matter precisely because the canonical texts themselves have very, very different beginnings. Ancient scepticism for this reason referred to the dilemma of which Hegel also speaks when he says, “the beginning of philosophy must be either *mediated* or *immediate* and it is easy to show that it can be neither the one nor the other; this is how the one or the other manner of beginning finds its refutation” (GW XXI, 53; Miller 67). The ancient sceptics already knew that starting with *something mediated* is not a beginning at all since it makes an assumption, which has to be questioned and getting behind the reason for that leads to the next assumption, which also has to be questioned; in principle this process goes on indefinitely and the beginning remains elusive. Then again the beginning with *something immediate* is a *contingent* beginning which, precisely because it seeks to begin with something immediate, remains *ungrounded*, i.e. this may just as well not be used to start with because the beginning can just as well be made with some other immediacy. So one person might begin with consciousness, another with matter, and yet another with evidence or with intellectual intuition, while a religious person might start with God. No doubt an entrance into philosophy can be found from all of these starting positions, but it remains doubtful whether any of these beginnings really do come first or do not simply remain silent on so many other things they presuppose.

Hegel himself starts with *being*. He does not do that because for him, as in the metaphysical tradition, being is the highest genus under which everything else that may in some sense possess being falls. For Hegel *being* is the emptiest concept and as such the most insignificant that can be thought. The character of *being* is not only that of *an* immediate, but of *the* immediate as such; it has no other meaning. It is the beginning precisely because it has in no sense any further content and for that reason does not assume or prejudice anything. Beginning is then not merely a function, but the *meaning* of being. The beginning is there to be overcome, to be moved on from, so remaining there would mean misunderstanding it. The immediate itself is thus only called upon in order to vanish again, i.e. to unleash mediation. *Being* as such is nothing other than an index for the not-yet of mediation and that is one of the reasons why

it is also immediately as yet nothing. It stands only for the presence of the logical itself, which is completely unsaturated, as yet devoid of all inner character and content, but it does not hold out in this presence, it does not persist. Absolute knowing, the state of mind and spirit into which the *Phenomenology* conveyed us, the realm of reflexive and self-sustaining cognition, is precisely only the *realm* as yet devoid of content. Subjectively what is required according to Hegel is the “decision” to hold out in this realm. It must now fill itself up by itself, which means by concretising the terms of thought and that means leaving the beginning behind.

Thus the reason why Hegel begins his *Logic* with being is not because, still stuck in the cage of metaphysical ontology, he regards it as a concept of particular ontological dignity. No, for Hegel being is a concept of the most extreme poverty of content, it is a concept which immediately says *nothing*. We recall that since the early writings (and more developed in the *Jena Logic*), Hegel could conceive of being as relation and this meaning of being will return in the *Science of Logic*, above all at the end when the logical circle closes and the absolute idea, the logically complete concept, the integral relation of the logical moments to one another, is expressly called by Hegel *being*. As we read in the closing chapter of the *Science of Logic*, “the absolute idea alone is *being*, immortal life, self-knowing truth, and is all truth” (GW XII, 236; Miller 824; cf. also GW, XII 252; Miller 842). This sense of being, absolute real relation that is simultaneously self-knowing relation, must first be achieved and is certainly no longer being as pure immediacy, but as mediation; it is not the sense of being as *beginning*, but that of being as *telos*, the goal that has revealed itself. At the beginning and as the beginning, however, being is “indeterminate immediacy”. The chapter on this beginning being takes off with a sentence that is no sentence, but an *anacolouth*, which indicates that nothing may be predicated of what is meant here, for we have neither the occasion nor the logical means for predication. The *anacolouth* says, “*Being, pure being*—devoid of all further determination” (GW XXI, 68; Miller 82). Hegel continues, “In its indeterminate immediacy it is merely equal to itself and not unequal to anything else, possessing distinction neither within itself nor outwardly. Any determination or content whatsoever that might be distinguished within it or by which it would be distinguished from another would make it impossible to grasp it firmly in its purity. It is pure indeterminacy and emptiness” (GW XXI, 68 f.; Miller 82). Aristotle said that metaphysics, the first philosophical science, considers being not in terms of its accidental characters, but as such, ὅν ἢ ὄν, *on he on* or *ens inquantum ens*.<sup>8</sup> For Hegel then there is really not much to think about initially

8 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Γ 1, 1003 a 21.

at least and all those other more concrete, i.e. more mediated, perspectives which as a rule come along with the topic 'being' have to be put aside. Whoever speaks of a table or a chair, for instance, that 'is there' or 'is present' no longer speaks of pure being, but of the fact that a concrete *something* stands before us. Whoever says that a particular person actually 'exists' promises with that to be able to give grounds for his claim, because *existence*, in contrast to being, rests on specific grounds. With 'being' one can associate the concept of substance, just as in the metaphysics of the ancients generally speaking they took true being to be οὐσία, *ousia*, or substance differentiating it from accidental being. But substance, which we shall encounter in the logic of essence, is in fact already a far too complex concept to be encompassed simply by being. The concept of substance refers to a specific unity-manifold structure persisting through the variations of appearances, which cannot be said of being in the proximate sense of the word as "indeterminate immediacy". The sole positive character Hegel concedes for being at the beginning is its *self-equality*, which itself in fact belongs to the language of reflection, for there is neither a concept of identity or equality nor comparison as such without reflection. So the term self-equality in fact says nothing about what being actually 'is' beyond the two negative characteristics of indeterminacy and immediacy. Indeed, it is unsayable, because the question 'what?' seeks a logical contour, a distinct, recognisable outline, which being as merely self-equality certainly does not possess. Being remains then, as it were, dumb—or it flips over into the meaning of being nothing. In the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel says that his statement "being and nothing are the same" can appear "so paradoxical to the imagination or image-based, representational thinking and to the understanding . . . that it might be regarded as perhaps not seriously meant at all".<sup>9</sup> The first response to the imagination's doubts is to challenge it to specify the difference that distinguishes the indeterminate immediacy of being from the indeterminate immediacy of nothing. *Nothing* is the same emptiness, the same abstraction of all content as being. The sole difference between the two is the purely formal one that *being* is the first and *nothing* the second term of the *Logic*. In this secondary status lies the fact that *nothing* is, again in a purely formal sense, dependent on *being* as its first. But all this is really only a matter of *names*. With the names *being* and *nothing* at the beginning of logic a formal difference is set up which turns out in the matter to be a unity; or a difference is named which is rather a *relation* or at least the potential for relation.

We can illustrate this perhaps best with the example of motion. Motion means that a body is both at a given point in space and is not at it, for if it *were*

<sup>9</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 88.

only at it without *also not* being there, then it would not be in motion and if it were only *not* at it, then statements about its status of motion or rest would lose all meaning. At the point in space S, then, what we have is a constant 'phase switch' between being-here and not-being-here of the moving body, where it is for the absolute concept of motion absolutely irrelevant which of the two phases one designates the positive and which the negative phase. Decisive here is solely the phase switch as such or that the one phase provokes the other. Decisive in this is that in the spatial point under consideration as such a differentiation, indeed a differentiation of the same thing, constitutes the unity of motion. Similarly Hegel's *Logic* begins with a differentiation; it does not begin with a static *first*, but with a *first* that is *immediately another*. We said earlier that it is precisely the essence of the beginning not to remain by itself, but immediately to vanish. The beginning vanishes in this not simply completely, so that it might seem as if no beginning had ever taken place, but rather into a first relation internal to logic itself, into the relation of the first difference, *being* and *nothing*, in which these actually are pure relata, moments of relation, not relationless others, merely other to each other, which is all that the hypostatizing imagination can make of them. The relation of *being* and *nothing* however, this first 'innerlogical' relation, in which they form a real unity is *becoming*.

Looking back from *becoming*, the difficulties posed by the beginning of Hegel's *Logic* for the imagination lie in the fact that *being* and *nothing* are regarded, through the names fixing them, immediately not as moments of relation, but as formal quasi-entities, as distinct 'meanings' and as signs with the distinctness of images referring to distinct 'given things', which they themselves immediately are not. If, despite the fixing names, *being* itself is grasped right from the start as relation, relation in its absolute meaning, i.e. without relata, then the identity, the self-equality of *being* is also clear—for relation as such is *one*—as indeed is the difference—and without *difference* there is no relation. *Being* and *nothing* function to enable a self-relating—as at first in *becoming*—to be thought, but each of these first two terms is nothing in itself. In Hegel's words:

The truth is neither being nor nothing, but that being into nothing and nothing into being—do not transit—but have already transited. . . . Their truth is . . . this *motion* of immediate vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*; a motion in which both are distinguished, but by a difference that by the same token has also immediately vanished. (GW XXI, 69 f.; Miller 82–3)

A logic that aims to be one of reflexive, self-knowing knowledge must begin with a minimally complex structure, or better with an elementary *activity*. Looking back it is clear that the problem of the beginning of the *Logic* was how to designate this complex structure, this activity in the form of immediacy. The problem was how to acknowledge the immediacy, the activity, the self-relating character of being. At the end of the *Logic* this sense of being as activity, as we said above, will emerge in its developed form. That should not surprise us, for we have seen in the early writings that Hegel found a new meaning in *being* principally from the concept of life; long before his *Science of Logic* he was thinking *being* not as a noun, as a thing, but *verbally*, as an activity.

That the concept of *becoming*, with Plato, can only be thought of as a “mixture” of *being* and *nothing*,<sup>10</sup> is perhaps by now also clear to the imagination. *Emergence*, one moment of becoming, means that, beginning from a relative nothing a relative being emerges; *passing away*, its other moment, means that beginning from a relative being a relative nothing results. Both lie in the general concept of becoming and in the same way, but each is paralysed within that concept of becoming too, as Hegel says. *Becoming* as such has neither without nor within it anything firm to hold onto, which is why it fails to generate any concrete determination remaining always a process devoid of contours. Here strictly speaking we must think *becoming*, not the becoming ‘of something’, of the fixed thing that beside its fixity might *also* become. We have to think the dynamic of self-relating, of differing.

Now the differing process of becoming directs itself as a total, unified *eidos*’ also *against itself*. When *becoming*’s moments *being* and *nothing* vanish within it, mutually paralysing each other, then *becoming* itself also vanishes, or what vanishes is the vanishing. What emerges from out of vanished becoming is that which *has become*, that which is *given* or *qualitative* being (*Dasein*). The dialectic of life can help here again to understand this better. Life is on the one hand the universal context, the universal of living vitality. But it is not merely the contourless aether of that universal, for it *generates* the living things originally, it individuates itself in them. The living things are the *given* form of life itself and they constitute a determinate *given* that maintains itself through and against emergence and passing away. For *becoming* the situation is more abstract, but in the main there is no real difference. The *given* is the result of *becoming* relating itself to itself, vanishing therein and thus a becoming that has ceased. It is *being* and *nothing* grasped as a unity at rest, or it is, simply put, as the initial statement on the category of *given* or

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10 Cf. Plato, *Republic* v, 478 e ff.

*qualitative being* has it, “determinate being”. As such it continues to hold here (and this statement is for Hegel’s position in general naturally of the greatest significance), that there is no *given* that has not *become*; according to Hegel it only “appears” as if the *given* were a “first . . . from which one would begin” (GW XXI, 97; Miller 109). Being here is the *given* as a result of *becoming* in which immediacy has reasserted itself, only now it is a question of an immediacy that does not simply transit into *nothing*, nor is it the same immediacy as that *nothing*. Now it is a *being* immediately including *nothing*—being here then has incorporated non-being, negation within it and that is what makes it a “concrete whole in the form of being”, i.e. “determinate being” (ibid.). Determinate being is distinctly qualified being, qualifying the given, and the *qualities* are initially given determinations, features or relations, given terms. But then this given, *qualitative being* is not determined only by additively acquiring such terms as colours and patterns, but just as much by determining what it is *not*, that is to say it is determined not only by *realities* but also by *negations*. Every given being is *different*, which is why the negation in it cannot be overlooked.<sup>11</sup> According to Plato one can say of the young man Theaetetus that he is sitting, but not that he is flying; Theaetetus’ qualitative being is determined equally by the ability to sit and by the absence of the ability to fly.<sup>12</sup> Being, then, is as such *determined* by the distinction between *being some things* and *not being other things*. This is why it is not merely given, i.e. immediately determinate being, but is *something*, qualitative being relating itself *to itself* via its differentness. *Something* is a being here that relates reflexively to itself in its differentness, in its otherness and as such is not merely immediate but inherently mediated, i.e. it asserts a self. As *something* qualitative being is reflected into itself, it is the individuated given or, as Hegel can also say, “the first negation of the negation” (GW XXI, 103; Miller 115). People, animals, plants are all in the same sense qualitative being; now even the logic of being does not regard them as somethings in the same sense, but as *distinct* somethings possessing selfness in their difference. *Something*’s self-relation negates the negation by affirming itself within that negation. With the category *something* a firmness, a hardness has come into play that is more than merely given being. Something is the first ontic form in which a kind of self-preservation emerges, of being equal to itself not only with respect to its background in *becoming*, but also in confronta-

11 At this point in the “Remark” to I.1.2.A.b. Quality (GW XXI, 101; Miller 113) Hegel gives the methodological principle that is so important to him “omnis determinatio est negatio”—all determination is negation (cf. Spinoza, *Epistula L*, in *Opera*, ed. C. Gebhardt, vol. 4, 240).

12 Plato, *Sophist* 263 a.

tion with its equals, against the *other* somethings. Martin Heidegger said that in European thought the givens, the *beings* have suppressed *being*, the ontic, i.e. the determinate things have pushed themselves forward ahead of being. On the *question of being* Heidegger claims that at the latest since Aristotle, we no longer even reach *being* but remain stuck in the *beings*. We only know being any more in reified form, in a form that renders it finite, only as what is positively given in one way or another or only as a positive fact, the kind the sciences provide us with. Heidegger calls the “difference between being and beings” the “ontological difference”.<sup>13</sup> He believes that demonstrating this difference should make it possible once again to return to a more original thinking, to return to being itself. With Hegel we can respond to this by stating that it is by no means clear why one should return from the stronger concept—that of a *being* or something—back to what is so much weaker, namely *mere being*. Heidegger says that this return must happen in order to reach again the real sense of a beginning or ‘originality’ of thought now that we feel increasingly uncomfortable in the world of given things, in a world furnished by us with objects. This of course implicitly acknowledges that the concept of being constitutes a beginning, while in the concept of beings as given things some sort of end has been arrived at. Hegel would agree, adding that this in no way implies that we always have to go back to the beginning. The beginning is, as we have seen, that which is supposed to *vanish* and which essentially cannot persist. The beginning of mediation includes an element of what is not-yet mediation but which *overcomes* itself into the mediation. *Something* on the other hand is already the result of a mediation, a complex concept that on logical grounds cannot be a beginning, but not because of some sort of malaise in the “facility with being” (Heidegger’s *Seinsgeschicklichkeit*). Hegel would certainly agree with Heidegger that we cannot relate to the world or to ourselves simply in terms of the category *something*. We have seen that a book, regarded as a something functions well as a saucer, but not as a medium of knowledge and intellectual self-relation. In that sense a person taken as a something is not an *I* or a *you*. It is the essence of crime to regard a person as merely an object in space and time, as a something, not as an *I*. The same distortion is present in the social Darwinist fantasies of the selective breeding of human beings, in which the person is not regarded as a free concept, as active self-determination, but is fixed as a something, as biomass and human material. In all these disparities and inadequacies, however, the *category* of something as such is as innocent as any category can be of its false application. This category can of

13 M. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen des Grundes*—On the essence of the ground, in *Wegmarken*—Milestones, Frankfurt am Main 1978<sup>2</sup>, p. 132.

course be legitimately applied to persons; every tailor and every surgeon does that, for what the tailor measures or the surgeon cuts is not the person as self-consciousness or as actually existing cognition. Briefly, Hegel would certainly not advise anyone to go behind the something and return back into empty being, but he would recommend going beyond it. And it is precisely with *something* that the path stands open forwards and not backwards. *Something* is then a relative end, a relative *finis*, a self-sustaining result of being and determinacy, consisting of *reality* (the positive quality) and *negation* (the negative quality), in the difference and unity of which *something* exhibits a selfness, its selfhood. But something is not only a relative *finis*, it is immediately also finite.

*Something's* inherent finitude reveals itself in various ways. One something is not the other something; whoever says "something" adds, as it were, through what he does not say "something else" thereby effectively portioning out the sphere of qualitative being. In the totality of realities then each something is a piece of the totality beside other pieces, which immediately implies that no something is itself all reality. Each something is clearly another piece from this totality; generally speaking then each something is an *other* something, and even more generally: *something is an other*. This may appear to be just a formal characteristic; the relation of something to another something is external to it, for, as Hegel says, in contrast to immediate qualitative being, something has developed a *being-in-itself* in which it is always removed from the relation to others, from its *being-for-another*. When Latin speakers talk of Peter and Paul, the one and the other, they say '*alius . . . alius*' and that refers initially to an external comparison; it is only in reflection that are they really distinct. Still, something is not in that sense only externally in each case an *other* something; otherness in fact lies in its character. Peter is not only comparatively other when I place Paul next to him; he is *as such* an other or, as Hegel says, "inherently an other". Peter and Paul too considered as somethings are not static identities, for their differentness is important to them 'in itself', they *are* their difference. Thus something's immediate expression of differentiated being, i.e. its form in the logic of being, consists in the fact that every something changes *realiter* and is only *idealiter* one. Peter and Paul even taken not as persons but as somethings are processual givens, beings who in very similar ways become older and younger, larger and smaller, healthier and sicker, wiser and sillier. As mere somethings they are powerless against otherness and constant variation into other being; in this they merely realise just what 'in itself' already lies in them. Such an immanent character of otherness, Hegel believes, is the essence of "physical nature" as "spirit's other", being unequal to itself and in itself different (GW XXI, 106; Miller 118). Nature is the realm of *somethings*, of finite determinations that are immediately, i.e. here qualitatively *others*, which also

means constantly *varying, becoming other*. The most abstract expression for this is that in nature nothing is independent of time, for every natural something falls in time and is a process within it. Temporal then by its very nature, every something shows itself to be also finite. Not that it is affected externally by time, which might then be seen as some sort of quasi-agent; rather by virtue of its internal character of being unequal to itself, its inner differentness, it *overcomes itself* into time externalising itself. Time as such is never an agent; whoever really believes that time actually does this or that to the things has succumbed to a classical paralogism, an illusory hypostatising stemming from the grammatical possibility of making time the subject of a sentence. In fact *the somethings give rise to each other*, they develop their differentiation *for each other*.

The claim that every something is an other, that every something is different, can also be expressed by saying that in the something its *character*, its inner state of being, and its *constitution*, its external state of being, are not congruent. Something is an other now means that its character and its constitution are askew. Hegel can express this in general terms by saying that it is the definition of the finite to be in fact unequal to its concept, which it in itself represents. The finite is only the fragmentary representation of its concept because its *ought* or deep character overshoots its *being*, its actual constitution. No natural individual, for instance, unconditionally epitomises the genus that it represents; nobody fully represents in his or her immediate constitution 'man' or the genus *homo*. For the individual this implies that humanity is never merely a being, but always an ought, a task; the *homo humanus* is not a given but a challenge to be taken up. The end, the vanishing of the natural individual happens when its character, ought or in-itself and its constitution, its physical being finally fall asunder. Since Plato's *Phaedo* philosophy has often considered the notion that man's destiny or inner character (in the above sense) is eternal, despite the fact that, of course, his physical constitution is finite in time. In this sundering the something retreats back to the level of mere *qualitative being*, losing that unity with otherness it had within it as its logical physiognomy, which is the point where something both is and is not. Here something is at its *limit*, which is the point of unity of being-in-itself and being-for-another, of character and constitution. The interesting point here is that the limit a something arrives at in the tension between character and constitution is also a link to another something. What something *is* and what it *is not* come together in the limit; this is what makes the limit the *totality* of the something, its immediate concept. The limit (*finis*) is the definition (*de-finitio*) of what it is in being a concrete something that brings it into relation to other somethings. For the ancient Greeks it was the *πέρας, peras* (limit, limitation) that made something

what it is and this limit was essentially understood as the *form* giving the something its *ὄν*, *on* (being), its face. Only with their limitations are the things capable of forming an ordered cosmos, which of course also means that each relates to the others via its limitations. The limit of a something delimits the space it may rightfully occupy. Since Anaximander the Greeks have said that in the limitations of things there lies a “justice of being” balancing each with the others.<sup>14</sup> Now the limit does not only refer to the inner character, the definition or the essence of the given being. Limitation does not only happen to the something externally, but also *lies within it*; being immanently limited is what makes the something as such finite. Thus it does not simply vary with respect to its qualities, it also varies *in relation to itself*, which in fact means that it ends up destroying its own somethingness. “The being of the finite things as such” says Hegel, “consists in the fact that the germ of their demise is their inner being: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death” (GW XXI, 116; Miller 129). The insight, Hegel goes on to say, that there is nothing to the self-preservation of the something afflicts the understanding with inconsolable sorrow, for it grasps the concept of finitude, the limit only from its negative side and concludes that there is really nothing to the being of things at all. In this way, according to Hegel, the understanding makes “non-being the determination of things”, rendering this non-being “therewith *immortal* and *absolute*” (GW XXI, 117; Miller 130). This misses the point that non-being, just like being, is not the absolute character of the finite, but that both are its moments and are held together in its limit. Being as such does not defer in any way to nothing, for the passing away of one finite thing is the emergence of the next, indeed one could even say that the one finite thing passes, as it were, ‘un-endingly’ over into the other finite thing. Generation after generation of individuals of a natural species are brought forth in a process stretching into infinity which is certainly not the negation, the overcoming of finitude, but its affirmation. Here the overcoming of the finite is merely an ought resulting in what is, according to Hegel, a “bad infinity”, that is an infinity consisting of many finites or in the perennial transition from one to the next finite thing. This is the sense in which Fichte’s philosophy came down to little more than a constant appeal to *overcome* the finite, constantly to overcome in theoretical as well as in practical terms the inadequate objective representation of the self without ever really getting beyond providing a new finite picture of the absolute self, a new finite objectivation of the subject and of freedom, which then had to be, again constantly, overcome. The bad infinity as an option for overcoming the finite makes of this latter a *barrier* that *ought* to be overcome. Both sides, barrier and

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14 Anaximander, Fragment B I, Diels-Kranz.

ought are immediately linked together for only in the perspective of the ought does the limit become a barrier. “As *ought* . . . the something is *elevated above its barrier*, conversely then it only has its *barrier* as *ought*. The two are inseparable” (GW XXI, 120; Miller 133). Kant said “you can because you should”.<sup>15</sup> He is unquestionably right in that, because the ought as such is already the reaching out beyond the barrier or the restricted being, thus showing the *possibility* that this restricted being *also is not*, which is thoroughly well grounded in the reality of the given being. But then for Hegel the opposite is just as true. “You cannot precisely because you should.” That is because your being is always something other than its character, its determination, something other than its moral in-itself or essence says it is (GW XXI, 121; Miller 133). Thus the ethics of Kant and Fichte necessarily became a system of bad infinite perfectibility that never makes it even to actually existing virtue, to, for instance, the ethical life we know from the *Natural law* essay or in fact never doing more than merely postulating it as we know from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

What then is the true infinity that contrasts so strongly with this “bad” or “negative” version? The word *infinity* itself clearly states that here finitude, being immediately defined by difference, is eliminated and overcome. The finite is, as we have seen, immediately different, immediately one and other and just as immediately the break down of their relation in the vanishing of the something. This is why the understanding reluctantly came to the conclusion that there is nothing to the being of finitude. Here we have the defining contrast; the infinite is the *overcoming* of this non-being, the negation of this immediate negativity, varying the variation or in other words setting, affirming the difference of the difference. Infinity is the negation of the negation and as such immediately affirmation, it is undeterred by difference, rather generating itself out of all difference. Once again we can call upon our fundamental model for Hegel’s dialectic, the concept of life. Life (and only life) contains death, the *vanishing* of the living individual. But then it also includes *reproduction*, initially to be sure the bad infinity of the reproduction of living things as perpetually renewed individuation, which is not really much more than a perpetually renewed reduction of life itself to the finite and is no more than the *ought*, the imperative to manifest the whole of life. No individual is what it in itself ought to be, i.e. life; it is an individual according to its constitution, which means it is also the opposite of life, namely death or making way for another individual. In all this, however, it is precisely within the emergence and passing away of the individuals—and, more importantly, nowhere else!—that life as their true unity, their affirmative ground, is truly *manifest*. Life is only *one* or a

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15 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, AA VI, 30.

*universal* as the reflection of itself into itself in the process of its moments, for this is how it *overcomes* that process into one great affirmation. True infinity is the inversion of the finite into a pure relation to itself and as such the proof that the finite is not simply something strewn about, immediately different and lost in a sea of difference, but that it has a self, or in fact that it is a self. One has to agree with Hegel at this point that a natural individual does not really die its own death, but *lives* it, unfolding it out of itself as a moment of its own true self, of its determinate being, indeed of the very ground of its character. It is interesting to note that the idea that death is an affirmation of life is not only found in Plato, but before him in Heracleitus too.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of infinity is perhaps the most substantial term treated in the logic of being. In infinity being implicitly transcends itself; one of Hegel's characterisations of infinity is that from within being it opens up the realm of ideality, into which immediate being as such is *overcome*. If it makes sense to speak of 'types' of infinity at all, then we have already encountered Hegel's two types. One is what he calls the "bad" infinity, the first negation of the finite, which means simply setting another finitude in the place of the first one again and again *ad infinitum*. In the true or affirmative infinity, the finite as such is set or posited as *overcome*, which we illustrated with the manifestation of life in the individual living thing. In the common imagination the infinite is usually set against the finite, as if the two were on different sides of a simple opposition. Hegel demonstrates that this image makes of the infinite itself something finite, namely the side of the opposition that finds its limit in the other side or which finds what it immediately is not in the finite standing against it. For the imagination then the infinite remains dependent upon the finite, being only what it is in contrast to that; but then, conversely, in this scenario the finite acquires a significance precluded by its concept, namely that of negating the infinite through its mere existence, i.e. of *overcoming* the infinite! Central to the theology of Calvinism is the dictum *Finitum non capax infiniti*—the finite cannot incorporate infinity within it. This statement designates not only the deficiency of the finite as not being capable of grasping infinity within it, but also that of infinity itself of not being capable of entering into the finite, which certainly only holds for the infinity of the common imagination, not for conceptually comprehended infinity. For Hegel this Calvinist statement is just as false as the image that assigns finitude and infinity immediately to the different sides of an opposition. Infinity is not just what remains left over after abstracting from everything finite. There is much more to the infinite than that, namely

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16 Heracleitus, Fragment B 62, Diels-Kranz.

*overcome*, idealised finitude—again life is not simply what remains left over when all the living things are set aside, but is precisely what the living things are in their vitality. Hegel says “the finite has vanished in infinity and what is is only the infinite”. In the mode of the bad infinity, finitude is imagined as meaning that the being of the finite is precisely to transit endlessly into other finite things; so one can say that the vitality of living things consists in generating new living things and then vanishing. In the mode of the true infinity, in contrast, finitude is but a moment of the infinite and of its self-affirmation; only here is the process of endless transition into others *overcome* restoring being now inviolable. For Hegel the true infinity is the negation of the negation, the overcoming of the immediate limitation, i.e. of the first negation. When we say of a work of art that it has an infinite significance, this means not only that the work inspires a bad infinite process of reception and an endless succession of different interpretations, however much this too, but more importantly it means that the “mutual determination of the finite and infinite” (GW XXI, 126; Miller 138) lies within it. In fact, the work of art restores itself perpetually anew against its finite interpretations; itself a true self, it annuls from out of itself whatever was said about it yesterday. The artwork is, of course, always bound to a finite material presence, but what is more important is that the spirit as such is also present within it so that its material constitution sets no positive limits, the material is not a simple other, but is *overcome* into the mediated quality of an assertion, a tangible presence of mind and spirit which as such is pure self-relation. It is precisely in this form that the work discloses itself to the self, to the I of the beholder. The being of the work of art is not a piece of wood, a tone or so many articulated sounds, which taken for themselves are always only finite somethings, only determinate givens. In fact, it is the being of the work of art that lends the wood, the tone or the sound sequences a transparency revealing another, as Hegel would say, an absolute being that is no longer merely a something here and now separated from other somethings. The essence of the artwork is to negate its finite form, or already to have negated it, and to have put spirit in its place. Whoever is still struggling with the materials is no artist, but at best an art enthusiast. Like everything infinite, the artwork is self-relation and it forces us into the relation to self. Being is restored in this self-relation as a “state of having returned into itself” (GW XXI, 136; Miller 148) and indeed in the strongest form it has attained so far. Its strength lies in being the negation of the immediate negative, of positive determination. True infinity is the great affirmation that rises above immediate *being*, *becoming*, *qualitative being* and every kind of finite *something*. In his *Negative Dialectic* Adorno chided Hegel for not remaining with the immediate negative

and instead *overcoming* it into a reconciliation.<sup>17</sup> In a certain sense Adorno adopts the Calvinist standpoint mentioned above, that the finite cannot encompass the infinite within it and that conversely the infinite is not capable of entering into determinate, qualitative being and of developing a real presence among us. Hegel would say that Adorno has failed to recognise that the finite is not the last word, that the positive and what can be rendered positive are not the truth. Its immediacy is its mediation for the truth, its determinate being is its selfhood—truth is not what is merely supposed to be something else which it really is not. Adorno does not go beyond the standpoint of the fragmentation of determinate being. His critical theoretical perspective is apparently blind to the insight that not only a caveat, a ‘nevertheless’, which of course is an ought, gives pause for thought amidst the fragmentation, but that something inviolable and imperishable shines through it all.

### 3 Being-for-itself, Number and Measure

Being that regenerates itself in infinity from out of difference, out of the decay or the end of finitude is *being-for-itself*. In this category then being-for-another, relational being or relatedness as such is immediately negated. Being-for-itself is initially unconcerned by opposition, by other things; it is pure *selfness*. Plato can be called the discoverer of *being-for-itself*; his *idea* is the *καθ’ αὐτό*, *kath’ auto* (for, by or according to itself) reflected into itself from out of the bad infinity of finite phenomenality, precisely true selfhood equal to itself. Being-for-itself brings what falls apart, the many, the manifold of finite being, together into a self-sustaining unity, just as the Platonic idea designates the imperishable one, because it is the self equal to itself of the many appearing things. With being-for-itself we have arrived at a concept of *actually given unity* or the *qualitative one*. Being-for-itself has about it a thoroughgoing negating of other being so that we can literally dub it what is “not-other” (the “*non aliud*”, as Nicholas of Cusa would have put it) and in this sense emphatically *one*. It consists in excluding from it every kind of otherness and transition into another and it does that by force of its self-relation, by being reflected into itself. What the unity of being-for-itself excludes are no longer others in the sense of qualitatively distinct somethings, but only other *ones*, other pure self-relations. In the relation to itself this *one* of *being-for-itself* excludes *itself*, the other one, from

17 Th. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*—Collected writings, vol. 6, Frankfurt am Main 1997, pp. 161 ff., pp. 295 ff. and *passim*. Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, English translation by E.B. Ashton, London 1973.

itself, which is precisely how it sets or posits the other one. Then again, the one that excludes the other from it is only one among many mutually *repelling* each other while simultaneously—in fact they are all *the same* oneness—mutually *attracting* each other. Again we can see a self-application of oneness happening here. The one set as one, the unified one, is the exclusion of what is not unified, of the one that is not set as one, i.e. of the many. The former, the unified one, vanishes into a pure point, into an absolutely undetermined *being-for-itself*, whose whole meaning lies in not being the other one, while simultaneously its logical form makes it the unity of all ones, the unity of the many. Now every quality, every immediately qualitative term of being is eliminated, which means that the one is the first category of the thinking that no longer thinks qualitative being, i.e. it has become the foundation of *quantity* in which being reflects itself as it were without somethings, without material opposition.

Hegel devoted great attention to the section on quantity in his *Logic*. Most of the most important additions to the second edition of the *Logic of Being* fall in this section. Nevertheless one can legitimately ask the question whether the treatment of quantity really belongs here in the logic of being at all. The logic of essence deals with the terms of reflection such as the principle of identity and the principle of (avoiding) contradiction, which are the most important terms required for a formal system, such as that of arithmetic. So perhaps the question should be whether numbers really are things with being and not rather structures of thought? The first of these objections was, as is well known, important in the tradition of the Platonists, the second, in contrast, is associated with the Aristotelians. This question as to the ontology of number is indeed answered ‘platonically’ by Hegel, for he sees in number an immediate being and not as in the terms of essence a *setting*, a positing, or a setting reflected as a setting. We say of the numbers or also of quantitative regularities that they *are* without, it has to be said, normally reflecting on the sense of being that we associate with this claim. We say that numbers and the laws of number are given and not simply that there are things we can count, which we thus set in an external relation to number. For Hegel *pure being* emerges again here, returning in quantity, only now it emerges from *being-for-itself*, which makes it a kind of being that is itself immediately a negative self-relation and hence there is no immediate otherness to it. In quantity all qualitative determination, all otherness and transition to others are overcome. For number as such it is absolutely irrelevant whether it counts apples, pears or anything at all. Indeed, in contrast to apples, pears and everything else that is countable, numbers appear to be eternal. Number is not subject to the finitude of qualitative being and even laws that can be given in quantitative form, like the laws

of nature since Galileo, have an air about them of participating in that eternity freed from the given. In quantity being has developed a maximal autonomy and its logic makes it easy to understand why it is that, since the Pythagoreans, quantity has so often been regarded as genuine being as such, as a being in comparison to which qualitatively determinate being as a whole was bound to be regarded as of less value, if not altogether as a chimera. Hegel does not rest his laurels on the standpoint of the abstract idealism of number; but he took considerable pains to analyse this standpoint in great detail according to its own inner logic.

The quantity section of the *Science of Logic* deals with the topics *quantity as such*, the *quantum* and *quantitative relation*. The difference between quantity as such and the quantum lies principally in the fact that quantity as such refers to the general character of determination by means of magnitude, while the term quantum refers to *determinate* magnitude. Quantity or magnitude as such contains two opposing moments, *continuity* and that particular form of discontinuity known as *discretion*. In the first moment, that of continuity or constancy, lies the attraction of the ones, their essential equality; in the second moment, that of discretion, lies their repulsion or the emphasis on unity in contrast to plurality. Quantitative thinking is one that functions in terms of *equalising*, of establishing continuities, while also being a determining, a *differentiating* kind of thinking, one that draws determinate differences. Quantitative thinking is what makes it at last possible, for instance, for the fall of a feather and the fall of a stone to be seen as cases of one and the same law of fall. Quantitative thinking makes it possible to predict an eclipse of the sun, i.e. giving the precise point in future time at which the path of the moon around the earth and the orbit of the earth around the sun intersect in such a way that the moon hides the sun. Both aspects of quantity, equalising the many with respect to the one and deriving the one from the many, enable it in so many varied ways to become the means for building complex structures of relations, which, as in the empirical sciences, can find application to immediate given being. What should not be ignored in all this, according to Hegel, is that every pure quantity inherently exhibits *both* aspects, namely continuity and discretion. Space and time, for instance, are certainly qualitatively speaking not simple quantities but the first terms of nature, even if as immediately given being it is easy to regard them as quantities; they are indeed highly susceptible to quantification. But that makes them both on the one hand purely continuous magnitude, i.e. infinitely divisible, and on the other hand discrete magnitudes, i.e. in themselves already divided into this 'now' and that 'here'. Ignoring the simultaneity of both moments leads, Hegel believes, to Kant's

divisibility antinomy, which for Hegel in terms of the *whole* concept of quantity is not really an antinomy at all.

Determinate quantity, that is the quantity behaving as one or exclusive quantity, is the *quantum*. The quantum is not concerned with magnitude as such; now we are in the realm of number, of degree and of quantitative infinity. Number contains continuity and discretion within it; continuity in number's cardinal moment of the *unit*, discretion in its ordinal moment of the *count*. The natural numbers, for instance, are each specific counts of ones as units, and are generated by the counting of ones. In contrast, what is counted in the basic arithmetic operations are not simply ones, but whole numbers. Multiplication, for instance, involves making a count of numbers all of which are equal and which now constitute the units; in squaring, the number is both unit and count and here the number acquires a sort of self-relation in that the quantum itself limits itself.

The limited quantum as such is a unit that includes plurality within it and it can be an *extensive* cardinal quantum, like a day as a unit of 24 hours, or an *intensive* ordinal quantum, such as the first day where the plurality of days is only potential, i.e. the intensive quantum has an incipient sense of a re-emerging quality, of qualitative determination. In the further development of the categories of quantity, Hegel pursues this re-emergence of quality in quantity starting from intensive magnitude with special interest all the way through to his very detailed analysis of the infinitesimal calculus, in which something like the true infinity of the quantum appears, the infinity of its autonomous continuity through all its derivations. The concept of infinity here in the infinitely small quantitative difference is what enables quantity to take on full qualitative significance so that it can become, among other things, the concept of real motion. The genuine concept of a qualitative quantum then takes us beyond the realm of quantity itself and on into the concept that concludes being as a whole, that of *measure*.

It is an ancient, a Platonic insight, that the things have their being due to and in the framework of specific measure; Plato's esoteric or unwritten teaching was to a considerable extent 'ontological metrology'. Measure here does not refer to any kind of external determination, to what is measurable in a thing with a yardstick or a stopwatch, but instead to that thoroughly real, immanent quantitative character immediately involving the essence of the thing and its capacity for achieving qualitative presence. Its measure ensures that the individual thing is mediated in advance with other individuals as well as with the universal. Despite still standing firmly on the ground of being, measure does involve an inseparable relation between *essence* and *existence* and to

that extent amounts to the first real anticipation of the *concept*. Hegel refers to measure as a “qualitative quantum”, a “quantum to which a determinate being or quality is bound”.<sup>18</sup> In measure number and determinate being do not stand externally beside each other, as when the pears in the basket are indifferent to whether they are counted or not. For it is important to the pears that their size varies only within certain limits or that the tree on which they have grown actually received its required measure of light, warmth, water and nutrients—that the tree suffered neither insufficiency nor excess of all these things. Similarly the lifespan of each organism has its specific measure, its quantum qualifying the organism as one of its defining characteristics. The body structure of a human being is measured against a specific fundamental proportion, which however individually variable is not boundless and certainly cannot be arbitrarily varied without affecting the physical humanity of the individual. Constitutive proportion is the ontic universal and here we can see already that the universal will not be a matter of a mere name. According to the Greek concept, manifesting the fundamental proportion, the inner measure generating being, is the condition for a person, an animal or also a building to be called ‘beautiful’. In Greek terms beauty is indeed the presence of the fullness of being mediated by measure or proportion. The determinate being of a state is dependent on the fulfilment of specific qualitative quanta, for instance, that the area of land it occupies is neither too small nor too great in relation to the autonomous maintenance of order in the state, that the population is neither too low nor too great and so on. As Hegel says, the “laws and constitutions...” become “something other...when the area of the state and the number of citizens grows. The state has a measure of its magnitude and driven beyond that it inevitably collapses” (GW XXI, 369; Miller 371). But the most important examples for measure as the “concrete truth of being” (GW XXI, 326; Miller 329) lie not so much in the realm of spirit, in which the incalculable and unpredictable factor of freedom is always in play, but in nature where we find specific measure such as definite body weights, specific animal body temperatures, harmonic relations and the like. Galileo founded the new science essentially as a science of proportions and Kepler followed him in that without concealing his own Pythagorean commitments. In this connection, Hegel says that there remains much to be done on the “mathematics of nature”, that is genuinely to think through the real measure of nature (GW XXI, 327, 340; Miller 331, 343), and this physical mathematics, precisely in the Platonic sense, would be a science of the measures that make being possible or that generate

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18 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 107; cf. in the *Science of Logic*: GW XXI, 323; Miller 327 and GW XXI, 329; Miller 332.

being. In relation to each other measures form ‘nodal lines’, which means that with continuous quantitative variation the qualitative leap into another determinate being happens abruptly and suddenly. Water suddenly enters upon a qualitatively new state when it turns into ice or steam at its freezing or boiling point after gradual cooling or heating; against the ancient dictum *natura non facit saltus*, for Hegel nature certainly does proceed by leaps and bounds (cf. GW XXI, 368; Miller 370). This is not the only reference to the theory of nodal lines, which is developed by Hegel with an eye to quantitative relations against the background of the mathematical theory of discontinuous functions.

In the framework of an introduction we can neither pursue Hegel’s theory of measure in detail nor attempt to develop what he postulates as a measure-theoretical “mathematics of nature”, which by the way clearly takes up one of the motifs we encountered in Hegel’s habilitation essay, *Philosophical Dissertation on the Orbits of the Planets*. The general result of the section on measure will have to suffice. It is that we only have the *immediacy of being* as a whole in fact as *mediated* or that what is here before us is given in advance not as immediacy at all, but as a *setting* resulting from a mediation. The something is in itself or objectively reflected, so a positivism of facts fundamentally excluding the negative *relatedness* as a constituent factor of being and restricting itself to the invocation of the immediate is no longer a possible philosophical position. In measure as such, of course, the mediation of the immediate is still itself immediate, negativity is the positive’s other and destiny, just as quantity and quality here immediately generate one another. The fact is that now both are just moments of a unity that can no longer be ontically grasped immediately; they are functions of one and the same (self-)mediation of determination. At the end of the logic of being stands *self-mediating determination*, the direct opposite of that indeterminate immediacy with which it began. Being as such has been *overcome* into mediation, now it only *used to be* being. The second beginning the *Logic* makes has being reduced to what *used to be* (Gewesenheit), that is to reflected being, to *essence* (Wesen).

#### 4 Midpoint in Essence and Reflection

With the second part of the objective logic, the logic of essence, we enter into what one might with the *Phenomenology* call “the first extrasensory world”. It is a world from which the immediately *ontic* has departed and left only a “shine”, a reflection, behind, something fundamentally mediated. The realm of essence is ideal, if only immediately so. So much is clear in essence from the start: far from truth passing *thinking* (in logic: the immediacy of

negativity) by, it, truth, can only emerge from thinking itself. This is why the logic of essence has to establish concepts or principles that have the significance of laws of thought right from the start; the principle of identity, for example, or the principle of sufficient reason. Nothing that does not conform to these principles will be recognised as a valid determination from the standpoint of essence, which is also the standpoint of reflection. This is retrospectively valid also for the entire realm of being, which will here be measured against the laws of thought giving it all now the value of a *setting*. The notion that one could measure being against thought, that thought might determine the being or non-being of being, is in fact far more common in natural consciousness than might at first appear. Natural consciousness concludes without much ado that something which contradicts itself cannot exist. It says 'I cannot imagine that!', by which it means 'That cannot be!' The inference from my inability to think something to the real impossibility of its being is a characteristic expression of the idealism of essence. Natural consciousness never asks itself exactly why it is that being or the immediate should conform to the laws of thought; it could only find the answer to this question by turning to the objective logic of being and essence.

The logic of essence as Hegel develops it in the second book constitutes a second beginning within the *Science of Logic*. An indeterminate immediacy again, as in the first part, starts us off here, except that instead of an immediacy of the given, this is the immediacy of differing, of negating and in that also an immediacy of self-determination or of *being-for-itself*. The *self-equality* of being has its counterpart here in a condition of *inequality-with-itself*, an immediate assertion of difference or differentiation by which essence sustains and produces itself as well as repelling immediate being from it, *overcoming* it. For it is the essence of being *passively* to be determined, just as it is the essence of essence *actively* to do the determining; but then generally speaking to determine means to distinguish. Essence as a whole is developed by Hegel in three sections. The first bears the title "Essence as Reflection into Itself". Here essence as that immediate negativity, as a "movement from nothing to nothing and through that back to itself", is made explicit in the terms of reflection with the drawing of differences reformulated as different modes of distinguishing. The terms of reflection give us reflection affirming itself as the negating of its own immediacy, an immediacy known to itself to be a negating. This is how reflection transcends itself becoming the "essentials" or "laws of thought", which thinking immediately recognises as its own, indeed as itself. Thinking cannot simply make these laws available to us; they contain its own nature "essentially", its own "being".

The second section is entitled “Appearance”. One could say it deals with the immanent *positivity* of essence, its *setting*. In appearance, while reflection effectively turns away from itself to construct an external world, in fact that world has nothing but reflection for its interior, so appearance fully obeys the law of reflection. Something similar is true in Kant’s case, for while the objective world for Kant is an external world of appearance regulated by the pure categories of the understanding, it is nevertheless formed only by thought. Appearance in Hegel’s logic of essence is *being* reconstituted by *essence*, this time certainly no longer the immediate given, but a mediated, reflected, a *set* being, i.e. one that has its ground outside itself.

Finally, the third section, entitled “Actuality”, overcomes the difference between ground and appearance by thinking through the ground as emerging into appearance, which implies conceiving what is set as setting itself and, following Hegel’s development, the result is the immediate absolute, self-mediation no longer related to something other beyond itself, which clearly harbours the concept within it. In this development essence realises itself by lending its inner negativity extension and immediate determinate being and we have to consider it especially in terms of its hinge function for the transition into the subjective logic, into liberated knowing.

“The *truth of being* is *essence*” (GW XI, 241; Miller 389)—with this formula Hegel opens the *Doctrine of Essence*, as this second book of the *Science of Logic* is called. We have a preliminary understanding of this from the negative self-relation of the determinate being we encountered above in the section on measure. The formula also encapsulates positions in a great deal of metaphysical thinking from Plato and Aristotle right up to our own time. In colloquial language too the question of what is essential goes beyond immediacy to a somehow truer or more central being. We know by now that true being is the being or the immediacy of *mediation*.

Being is immediacy. But knowing wants to find what is true, what being *genuinely* is *in and for itself*, so it does not remain with the immediate and its characters but breaks on through it assuming that *behind* this being there is something other than being itself, that this background constitutes the truth of being (ibid.)

Heidegger questioned this ‘background’ in the logic of essence, but it is precisely in these terms that he distinguishes himself from metaphysics far less than he realises. Metaphysics was the annihilation of the immediate in favour of the essential background. Measured by this essential background,

the inessential foreground is only apparently a being, the foreground is immediacy reduced to a “shine”, a reflection. Generally speaking a reflection has its being in a relation or a reference to something which it itself is *not*. In Hegel’s language what we have here is not merely an opposition of one other to another, but the relation of being reflected into that other or of overcoming itself into the other. This holds externally for a piece of paper, of which the language that no longer regards it as a simple being can say that it is a reflection. The banknote is a piece of paper in which what is essential is not present in its qualities or quantities, in its immediacy; what is essential to it is that *for which* it stands; its invisible monetary value within it shines through the piece of paper. The same is true for the Kantian object of experience, the appearance that is essentially this: not to be the thing-in-itself but only its reflection within immediacy. Common attitudes may regard the reflection as illusory or untrue and as something which for that reason must be overcome. For Hegel the situation is more complicated than that. He sees essence as inseparable from the relation of that reflection, of the superficial display; Hegel sees essence as “its shining of itself into itself” (GW XI, 249; Miller 398). Setting the immediate as already *overcome*, in the sense of transcending itself, into a relation is what he has in mind here. The reflection as static reflection image never vanishes from the thinking of essence. It is at most unrecognisable when immediacy is grasped so seamlessly as standing for another that taking it as immediacy which is *not also* its own mediation is impossible, or when conversely something mediated is taken as an immediacy. This can happen when the result of an historical development that is a function of a total cultural or social system is regarded simply as a given fact.

The new structure in essence is one of correlations, of mutual relations. Even essence is not really only *one* side of the relation, not true being against apparent being, but rather *relation as relation*, or as Hegel says, difference’s *reflection* itself.

Essence is reflection; the motion of becoming and transition that remains within itself; in which what is distinguished is determined as nothing other than that which is in itself negative, as “shine” or static reflection. (GW XI, 249; Miller 399)

The two sides are immediate negatives, thus not given for themselves, but only *moments* of the *relation*, and the reflection that goes from the one to the other and back again is a “*movement from nothing to nothing and through that back to itself*” (GW XI, 250; Miller 400). At this point we can compare this situation with a classical distinction in the logic of essence, one that we have already referred

to, namely the Kantian distinction of thing-in-itself and appearance. The two sides are nothing apart from their distinction; they have their significance and their being only in the distinction and what is affirmed in them is only the *distinguishing* itself, the immediate and immediately *active negation* and this is what Hegel calls reflection as such, which has also been called “autonomous negation”.<sup>19</sup> These are the free immediate negatings or negative settings in which *in nuce* the entire world of essence lies. In fact we have already encountered the essential form of this autonomous negation at the beginning of the logic of essence in simple differing, in self-relating. Then, however, being could only be interpreted from the standpoint of this differing of things distinct or related and was not able to assert itself in terms of its pure *being-for-itself*; this is what happens here with reflection, or negation, which itself is now *thematic*.

In Hegel's account reflection takes three main forms. First is immediate or *setting* reflection, then comes *external* reflection and finally it is *determining* reflection. Setting reflection is self-referential negating, *distinguishing as such* distinguishing itself from itself, thus drawing a distinction which is immediately withdrawn. This distinction is like that of Kant's between thing-in-itself and appearance, which is initially consciously drawn; but it is not the distinguishing itself contrasted with what is distinguished, not the relation of distinguishing, but just the settings, the sides asserted to be different in comparison to which distinguishing as an activity appears to be a third factor. To make this clear the act of distinguishing needs to set or take the difference as a precondition in order to set itself against it, against the difference. This means that it knows itself immediately as something it is not in distinction to what it immediately is. This is how reflection repels the assumption it has made away from itself setting itself externally against it; or it sets, as Hegel says, both its assumption and itself as the “return into itself” and as “negativity relating itself to itself and remaining within itself” (GW XI, 251; Miller 401), essentially referring only to itself. Pursuing the example of the thing-in-itself and appearance further, that this distinction was *drawn* or merely assumed is forgotten, so that *set* or objective reflection (the appearance) appears in the same sense in which the *setting* or subjective reflection understands it, namely as the *external* thinking that has drawn the distinction and thus does not reach the in-itself of things at all. Reflection regards itself now as ‘only’ the reflection of things, as ‘merely’ a thinking that ‘naturally’ does not reach into the inside, does not reach the truth

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19 D. Henrich, *Hegels Grundoperation. Eine Einführung in die “Wissenschaft der Logik”—Hegel's fundamental operation. An introduction to the “Science of Logic”, in Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart—Idealism and its present situation* (FS for W. Marx), Hamburg 1976, 208–230.

of what things are. A prejudice more tenacious than this one of the externality and formality of thinking is hardly to be found anywhere else in modern times and it seems indeed virtually impossible to eliminate. Perhaps the transition from setting to external reflection here can be explained by reference to the relationship Kant sees obtaining between the categories in their role of constituting the objects of experience and the assurance that we really cannot truly know those objects, we only have them as appearances. Thinking here means first setting or positing objectivity as such, but then removing itself from the objects. We have already seen that ultimately even natural consciousness is not so modest as to regard itself *merely* as an external reflection of things; it knows itself rather as making laws for the things, determining them, in that it demands from each of them that it be identical to itself, that it not be simultaneously A and not-A in one and the same respect, or that each of the things must have a ground. As a law-maker reflection certainly does address the *interior* and extrasensory aspects of things and this is precisely how it sets itself as, or makes itself into, that which sets or makes the assumptions. This is the sense in which it is determining reflection and, initially, reflection *determining itself*, i.e. establishing laws of reflection.

Hegel calls the laws of reflection “essentials” or “terms of reflection”. As he says:

The *terms of reflection* were usually taken in the form of *propositions* and it was said of them that they *hold for everything*. These propositions were considered to be *the universal laws of thought*, fundamental to all thinking, absolute in themselves and unprovable, which, as soon as it grasps their meaning, every kind of thinking accepts immediately and without objection as true. (GW XI, 258; Miller 409)

That robustness, the way the laws of reflection (first and foremost the principle of identity,  $A = A$ ) appear to be the ultimate and highest principles of science—Aristotle claimed this status for them in metaphysics as the philosophical science of principles—lies in the fact that they are immediately *self-affirming* propositions so that they are not amenable to external proof, nor indeed do they need it. Hegel sees the self-affirmative aspect of these principles or laws as lying in their character of encapsulating the *autonomy* of reflection, the power of thought to *overcome* or negate all immediacy. Thus the content of the first of them, the principle of identity, is nothing more than the immediate expression of this self-affirmation so that the *form* of the proposition, at least apparently absolutely certain and unquestionable, and its *content*, which speaks of unqualified equality with itself, also appear to agree immediately with each other. The principle of identity expresses a pure self-relation,

$A = A$ , in which thinking as such immediately participates as it is its own specific expression. This is clear from the fact that in truth no qualitative being, no individual being fulfils the demand contained in this law of thought. *All* qualitative being, including the true infinity, is always different, i.e. determined by one and by another so that there is simply nothing in the realm of qualitative being that fulfils the principle of identity and that is not in fact itself differentiated. But then it is precisely in this that reflection finds its superiority to immediate being, that it represents an equality with itself surpassing everything that being has to offer. Kant made the identity of consciousness, the formal equality of the I, the condition for the possibility that we can dwell at all in a world as the ordered totality of what is determinate and that can be shared with others. If that formal identity “I think” collapsed, then so would my world too—all order, every distinction between an earlier and a later point in time, all continuity in concepts and, of course, all science and knowledge—they would all collapse. So Kant sees formal identity as the highest point to which everything else must be attached; but it cannot be found in the sphere of entities or appearing things, of objects; it must lie in thought. The simple tautology  $A = A$  is thus, one could say, not only the key to the possibility of thinking and of thoughtful knowing, but also the most powerful diktat that thought could ever impose upon immediacy; applied to being, the proposition  $A = A$  is a *demand*, an *ought* to which being immediately accedes. One can say in complete generality that the so-called “eccentric positioning” of man,<sup>20</sup> the fundamental anthropological fact that man does not fit smoothly into the world, but only finds his place transcendently and in fact has to reform it to turn it into his world, comes down essentially to the fact that man can think in terms of the principle of identity and impose it upon his immediacy. This holds despite the fact that identificational thinking itself is a tremendous abstraction. We have recently begun to become painfully aware of the artificial world man has constructed and imposed on the natural immediacy of the planet earth by force of identificational thinking in its abstractness and its nihilism—for everything built by reflection is built on negation.

The principle of identity does not reveal its one-sidedness or its logical limitation only in the consequences of its application, but already in its immediate form. One says, initially not without reason, that the principle of identity is a *tautology*, which itself is clearly a tautological statement, for without the principle of identity we would have no concept of tautology at all. What this really means is that the principle of identity alone does not allow us to move on from

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20 Cf. H. Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie*—Stages of the organic and man. Introduction to philosophical anthropology, Berlin and New York 1975<sup>3</sup>, especially 288 ff.

it to any other content beyond identity. In identifying thinking reflection does not refer to anything else beyond itself; it is not authorised by anything outside itself to think these thoughts and nothing outside it can lead it astray when thinking them. This is equivalent to saying that identity in this initial meaning does not possess determinate being. There exists nothing at all that simply is so determined as the principle of identity prescribes. Leibniz demonstrated this by setting the princesses of Hanover in the Herrenhausen park the problem of finding two leaves that were completely identical to each other. The astonished princesses had to concede that even in all the hedges and trees of such a large park as Herrenhausen, there were no two leaves identical to each other. They were persuaded in this empirical manner that identity belongs wholly in the realm of thought, of ideality and that everything that exists on this earth is not only one but also another. This is why the principle of identity in fact can only be indirectly expressed and illustrated. We can certainly bring it down to the formula  $A = A$  and write this down. We write here three signs and among them then (necessarily) two *distinct* A's, one on the left of the equality sign and the other on the right. Whoever has understood the principle of identity has naturally also understood that it is *essentially* (not in terms of being) irrelevant where a sign stands, for in the thinking of identity at least all immediate difference should be eliminated. To have understood the formula  $A = A$  means precisely to have let the thought be repelled from or provoked by the formula and in this way to execute in thought the pure self-production of the unity that is identity. This self-production of identity is immediately a negating, a differentiation. Identity negates plurality, that, for example, of the three distinct signs used to express it, *overcoming* or merging them into an immediate unity automatically differentiating itself from everything else. This is the sense in which identity is tautology, i.e. it says *nothing*. Whoever says correctly according to the principle of identity 'a tree is a tree' has not expanded our botanical knowledge in any way. Then again with that is also stated that the sentence 'a tree is a bush' is *false*, i.e. that the tree *implicitly distinguishes* itself from the bush. The identical has thus been identified as *discriminating* itself, *setting or asserting itself differently*. Clearly, it is the same self-relation of reflection that identifies and that distinguishes; the self-relation of reflection is the production of unity in the same way that it is the production of difference. Relation, as we have seen, presupposes both unity and difference, equality and inequality. In identity negating, which is essence itself, has negated itself or negating has distinguished itself from itself. The difference is, as difference overcome, now only a moment of identity, but then conversely identity is only a function, a moment of self-differentiation. It makes no difference whether we say that the tree is what it is because it is not, among other things, a bush or that the

tree is not a bush because it is a tree. Identity and difference are thus not *two distinct* categorial terms of thinking but one and the same: they are 'identical' functions of reflection. You cannot identify without differentiating just as you cannot differentiate without identifying. This is why everything determined to be identical is also determined as being different and vice versa—Peter is Peter already to the extent that he is not Paul and the principle of identity itself is what it immediately is to the extent that it is not the principle of, for instance, plurality; to be an identical function of reflection *means* to be a function of the plurality of reflection.

Plurality is for Hegel the immediate unity of identity and difference. Trees, bushes, grasses and mosses are different identities, which are separable as such and have as little to do with each other as the different animal species existing beside each other in a zoo. Merely being set beside one another—which characterises the form of distinction in plurality—actually *erases* the *relation* to one another lying potentially in all distinction. It has become merely a relation in itself, expressing itself only as an external reflection of the matter capable of determining nothing but equality and inequality. Thus external reflection can decide that trees and bushes are equal in that they both put out leaves but unequal in that trees have a trunk and a crown, neither of which bushes have. The logic of plurality opens up the broad field of comparison; a field now occupied by vast disciplines like comparative jurisprudence, comparative religious studies or the historical comparative studies of art, literature and of historical data itself. In the field of comparison it is always possible in principle to find an aspect of equality as well as other aspects of inequality for anything. As a historian of philosophy one can always object to any attempt to grasp the history of philosophy as a unity by saying that philosophies are *unequal*, that they are very different things fundamentally excluding relationships between apparently common problems. Indeed one can insist that such a unifying perspective take a back seat to the real business of philosophy in its diversity. When Aristotle refers to the pre-Socratic philosophers, historical comparative studies would say that he understands them only 'in his own terms'; the pre-Socratics always intended to say *something different* from what Aristotle takes from them. Indeed, Aristotle himself obviously intended to say something quite different from what later Aristotelianism found in his works. Nevertheless, the fact is that Aristotle understood the pre-Socratics not only as thinkers who represented different standpoints from his own, but as partners in the undertaking of thinking, as philosophers who said things about the same topics he spoke of, things which sometimes were diametrically opposed to what he had to say on the matter. In all this, Aristotle did not regard the distinction between himself and the others as harmless plurality, but as an

*opposition*. Opposition happens when there exists *simultaneously* a relation of equality and one of inequality. The other speaks on the same matter but says something very unequal to one's own statement; he may even do that by using the same words to mean different things. This is the point where the relation, erased on the level of mere plurality, re-emerges. In the zoo lions and antelopes live beside each other without any relation to each other. Out in the wild they only form a mere plurality when they are completely and totally different, namely dead; in life, in contrast, they live in food chains, in the opposition between predator and prey. Two states that want different things can for that very reason live side by side in peace and harmony with one another. Two states that want the *same* thing, in contrast, can see the opposition break out all too easily. "I want the same as my brother Karl, Milan!" said the French king Francis I and this was a declaration of war on the Habsburg emperor.<sup>21</sup> Textbooks of the history of philosophy feature different philosophies as merely distinct, and, as the theologian Rudolf Bultmann is said to have done, one can read a history of philosophy and after each chapter on a specific philosopher say with satisfaction, "He was right!" In the living practice of philosophy, however, philosophers and their philosophies stand in opposition to one another; they struggle with one another, they try to outdo each other so that the history of philosophy has less the character of an amicable coexistence in allotments and much more that of the ancient *agon*, the competition for all or nothing, and that over the entire terrain of thinking.

In the realm of the opposition, of contrary or contrasting determination, reflection is no longer external to the objects as it was in the case of comparison, for now each side of the opposition is reflected in the other; it is what it is by being the *determinate negation* of the other. Here the *principium exclusi tertii*—principle of excluded third, holds, while in the realm of plurality only the principle of the identity of indiscernables held sway. Red and green are distinguishable, so they are not identical but distinct colours. One and the same area, however, can only be painted either red or green, *tertium non datur* again; a decision must be made in favour of one or the other. The choice made reflects within it that it (the choice) has excluded a contrary or contrasting possibility. This becomes clearer with terms which, unlike the colours red and green, do not designate an immediate qualitative being, but which are themselves constituted by reflection and for that reason unquestionably belong to the sphere of essence. The small is the opposite of the large, the left that of the right, and each is only what it is by relating to its opposite while simultaneously excluding it. We speak of terms of relation and recall that essence as a whole thinks

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21 The example can be found in Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, AA V, 28.

in relativities letting one side be set by the other and that even distinguishing does not just separate, it also correlates. Hegel's most important pair of concepts in this matter is *positive* and *negative*. He writes, "The *equality* with itself reflected into itself, which contains within it the close relation to inequality, is the *positive*; similarly, the *inequality* including the close relation to its non-being, equality, is the *negative*" (GW XI, 273; Miller 424). The one excludes the other; the choice made of the colour, the positive choice, negates the negative; the negative choice, the choice not made, is conversely set or determined by the positive choice. To that extent, both reflect the same relation, for each is determinate or fixed by virtue of the non-being of the opposite determinate; each is both positive and negative—or, briefly put, each is what it is only as the *contradiction*. In Plato's *Theaetetus* Socrates says it appears as something of a riddle to him that, depending on who he stands beside, he is a short man in one case and a tall one in the other, and that without increasing or decreasing his own height.<sup>22</sup> We would probably say that it appears something of a riddle to us exactly why Socrates should find something like that to be a riddle—and in saying that we have drawn the terms 'short' and 'tall' back to the level of comparison, which means that we have assigned the terms to different relations. But Socrates wants to know what exactly he *is*: tall or short, to which the answer can only be: both—or, which amounts to the same thing, neither of the two, for in that Socrates is both, the two cancel each other out. This does not diminish the fact that Socrates does have a specific size and it seems rather nonsensical that his size should be neither small nor large. Either of the terms small or large would set or fix Socrates' size. It turns out, however, that this size in its setting, in its fixity is in fact always merely relative, that it can only find expression in the contradiction of opposing terms of quantity. This is why it excludes itself from itself in the set term, or it ceases in that term to be what it is. Socrates' size requires him to be designated as large or tall and as small or short. With this there appears behind the contradiction of the settings a unity which itself is not set, but is rather itself what does the setting. Hegel calls this unity the *ground*.

Hegel's provocative assertion, "*All things are in themselves contradictory*" (GW XI, 286; Miller 439) has not only led to many misunderstandings, but has even inspired some downright vilification of his philosophy. It has been suggested that statements like this mean that Hegel's philosophy admits the contradiction, thus nullifying the principle of *avoiding* contradiction, which since Aristotle has been recognised as *the* foundation of all rational discourse. This is not true at all. On this question we will confine ourselves to the following

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22 Plato, *Theaetetus* 155 b–c.

observations. The principle of avoiding contradiction clearly presupposes that there are contradictions in one way or another. In his discussion of the antinomies of pure reason, Kant spoke of the fact that there are contradictions, for example in the second antinomy in relation to the problem of the divisibility of matter—matter appears simultaneously to consist of indivisible ultimate components, while also at least potentially to be infinitely divisible. With his antinomies of reason Kant actually established a principle of *not avoiding contradiction*, for reason, he claimed, is driven by its own inner necessity into antinomy. Be that as it may, if contradictions did not exist, then there would be nothing to avoid. One might ask oneself how contradictions come into the world—and the standard answer would then be: through incorrect thinking, i.e. because thinking does not proceed as it *should*. The contradiction then lies in the subjectivity or in the arbitrariness of thinking. But we have just seen that for Kant contradiction does not lie in arbitrariness or subjectivity, but in the nature of reason itself; in this case it would be arbitrariness *not* to think the contradiction. For Hegel, Kant's tendency to restrict the contradiction exclusively to reason shows far too much "tenderness for the things" (GW XI, 272; Miller 423), a tenderness, a courtesy that seeks to avoid convicting the things of contradiction; the things should not contradict themselves, but be completely free of contradictions, i.e. each identical to itself. The ancient sceptics demonstrated that contradictions do indeed lie in the things. If the concept of motion means that an object at one and the same point in time *is* and also *is not* at one and the same location—for, as we already know, if it were only *there* and not *not there*, then it would not be in motion but at rest, and if it were only *not there* and not also *there*, then the question would not arise in the first place. So motion contains a contradiction, something is *set* and *not-set* (i.e. denied) in exactly the same respect. Similarly the opposition of *is* and *ought*, constitutive for each finite existing thing, itself generates the contradiction and, according to Hegel, for example one can say that an illness is nothing other than the organism falling into contradiction with itself, in a contradiction that is immediately present as the sensation of pain and in which the organism can actually perish.

Hegel insists that even ordinary common sense recognises the existing contradiction as lying in the things themselves, for instance when it speaks of "contradictory arrangements" (GW XI, 287; Miller 440), of customs and conventions that stand in contradiction to a given time or culture, or when it points to the difference between the ideals represented by a political party and the manner in which it is financed as a contradiction. On a less banal level Fichte conceived of the I, subjectivity, as an immediate unity of setting and

counter-setting, of assertion and opposition, of self-identification and self-differentiation. Indeed, one can say in general that if man is the animal that is not fixed in a setting and cannot be so, that this can also be expressed by saying that man is the *essentially existing contradiction*, in the sense that he is the essentially existing overcoming of his condition of being set or fixed in some way; man is a taut unity of an opposition. In his every act, man *contradicts* the world as it is. In every genuinely human action, he shows himself to be self-referential negativity and precisely in that a *self* determined to break through any definition pinning it down in the form of A or not-A, which means that his very mode of existence is the contradiction. When Nietzsche said of himself that he was “not a man”, but “dynamite”, he had, ignoring the reification in this term, only expressed what subjectivity actually is as the existing contradiction.<sup>23</sup> “*Speculative thinking*” at all events “consists solely in the fact that thinking firmly grasps the contradiction, thereby within it firmly grasping itself” (GW XI, 287; Miller 440).

Despite everything said above Hegel’s theory of the contradiction does not hold fast to that and come to a standstill with it. The contradiction resolves itself, for it “goes to ground”. The contradiction is the immediate identity of that positive and negative mutually excluding each other. But then what they exclude is precisely their *close relation* or their *self*, their *unity* and *wholeness*, without which they are not what they are. The negation of positive and negative leads to the self that asserts or sets itself within both, but which did not emerge into view because it is not a setting, but what does the setting itself. The contradiction of large and small led to height itself, the quantity that in its concept is what sets or creates this contradiction. The contradiction in the organism’s illness refers to the organism itself pursuing its survival through this contradiction and beyond it, by which it demonstrates itself to be self-preservation. The contradiction did not appear without a ground, just as when two living things get into contradiction with each other and are out for each other’s life; precisely in that they are also fighting over life itself as the ground of their existence. The ground is that which is not immediately there in identity and difference; it is their mediation, their genuine unity.

The category *ground* constitutes a first summary of the thinking of essence; which can also be seen in language where the German expression *im Grunde*—fundamentally, means about the same as ‘essentially’. When Leibniz spoke of the fact that nothing exists without “sufficient grounds” (the principle of sufficient reason), without *ratio sufficiens*; this means that everything that exists

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23 Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, “Why I am a destiny”, 1.

is mediated, is set or posited by another, by something else. This seems to be a typical question of metaphysics, perhaps quite simply *the* question for metaphysics, which studies the things in or from out of their grounds, seeking to get to the ground of things. This question abstracts from the immediacy of things, it wants to know what the things 'genuinely' are. Thus, the accidental *form* in which something appears can be disregarded and instead interest is directed to the *essence*. But essence as ground is the determining factor, the form that stands against what is set by the ground, what is formed by it, the matter or material opposed to it. The formed material is the content to which the form is no longer external but essential. Whoever says that the form is not important and only the content matters, misses the point that the content only exists as formed. Conversely, whoever says that in philosophy the content is not as important as abstract forms, such as those of formal logic, misses the point that determinate forms only exist as reflections of determinate content, just as the thinking of formal logic implicitly promotes a particular ontology. In the form-content relation the ground becomes a *determinate ground*; it is no longer merely the ground in general, but the one that finds itself anew within that which it grounds, within what is *grounded*; the ground translates itself into what is grounded. The ground is only negatively, i.e. as self-relation, what the grounded is positively, i.e. as related to another. If what is grounded can be spoken of as a thing, then the ground is the *condition* for the thing. The ground is *unconditioned* and questioning cannot seek to get behind it, while the thing is what is conditioned or *derived* and as such clearly prompts the question, what is its ground? The logic of the ground tries to think of the thing *doubled*; once as the thing here and the second time as that which is responsible for the fact that the thing came about; first as immediate and then again as mediated. This is the relation in which the ground emerges as the essence of the thing, but it is not its cause. The *cause* is simply something other on the same level as the thing, which is then the *effect* into which the cause transits. The ground is rather the *matter itself* or the *thing itself* thought of as effectively alienated from itself, torn asunder into, on the one hand, the conditions of its being here at all and, on the other, its own integral process of existing. It is sufficient for just one of the many conditions not to be fulfilled to, as it were, hold the thing back from its existence. But if they are all fulfilled then the ground moves directly into *existence*—which means that the ground is now no longer external to this existence but fully represented in it, *overcome* into it.

*The matter emerges from the ground.* It is not set or grounded by the ground in such a way that the ground remains beneath it, rather being set in this way is the emergent motion of the ground outwards from itself and literally its own vanishing. The ground acquires external immediacy,

i.e. the moment of being, through *unification* with the conditions. But it does not acquire that immediacy as something external nor through an external relation; for as ground it makes itself into a setting and its character of being simply essential moves together with itself within the setting thereby *overcoming* itself; this is what makes it the vanishing of its distinction from its setting and hence simple essential immediacy. The ground thus does not remain behind as something distinct from what it grounds. Rather, the truth of grounding is that the ground unites itself with itself therein so that its reflection into another is its reflection into itself. Just as the matter is the *unconditioned* then, so also is it that which is *groundless*, and only to the extent that the ground has *gone under* and is no more . . . does it emerge out of the ground. (GW XI, 321 f.; Miller 477 f.)

Grounding, getting to the bottom of things as such, does not mean *distancing* oneself ever further from the things or from the matter by venturing into what are in principle endless hierarchies of explanations, justifications, argumentations as groundings, but on the contrary it means *arriving back at* the thing that was to be grounded. The need for the development of the ground lay in the contradiction that the ground *overcame*, the ground into which the contradiction vanishes. The ground develops itself as the return to the determinate matter into which the ground or essence in itself of the matter vanishes. Grounding is a figure of the thinking of essence, an activity of reflection. It opens up a distinction, a duality with the intention of revoking it again. Correctly understood there is no such thing as a non-circular grounding, for the ground that does not logically merge in conclusion with what it grounds, that does not lose itself again therein is in fact no ground at all, but only the essence distinguished from the immediate. It is nothing more than the superficial semblance of a ground, not yet the ground that itself appears and exhausts itself in its appearance.

That retreat of the ground into immediacy turned the latter into something which has emerged out of the ground, into the reflection of the ground as an immediate unity. What initially emerges out of the *ground* is *existence*. Existence in the logic of essence is neither being nor qualitative, determinate being, the given; it is, as Hegel says, “essential being”. This determination means immediately that existence in its immediacy is a *relative* being. Existence’s relativity is not apparent at first glance, it remains concealed, for within existence the ground, and with that the relation to another, is precisely something *overcome*. Existentialism made the groundlessness of existence a central issue in philosophy. It does not seek to ground or get to the bottom of things, but it does demand of us—as Kierkegaard did already—that we decisively be *individuals*,

that we take the decision in favour of individuality, or as Heidegger has it, not to fall for the general, anonymous “one”, but to be for oneself “genuine”, i.e. “essential”. Existence as an individual and as deciding for individuality is also found in the case of other existences. It is essentially not the totality, not the world as a whole, but a being-in-the-world as a being-together with other existences. What sounds affected enough in existentialist jargon sounds in Hegel far more sober.

Existence is the immediate unity of reflection-in-itself and reflection-into-another. It is thus the indeterminate plurality of existing things as reflected-in-themselves and simultaneously also as shining into others, i.e. they are *relative*, forming a world of mutual dependency and infinite interconnections . . .<sup>24</sup>

Existence shows itself to be relative in that it is mediated by other existences, but also in that it itself is in itself the centre, the midpoint of a manifold of existence. That existence follows from out of essence is not merely something that the ontological proof of God’s existence has always known; it is also the knowledge of the logic of existence as set, posited immediacy. The whole of the existences is always reflected in the individual existence, which itself is dependent on other existences, thus on conditions of existence, just as it is itself a condition for other existences. This is precisely what makes it no simple *being-for-itself*, but one that derives from others while simultaneously being *for* others. The existence that relates itself to other existences is a determinate existence, which, from within its determinacy, *shines into others*; this is what makes it as such *appearance*.

## 5 Essential and Absolute Relation

The last third of the *Doctrine of Essence* can only be considered briefly here. Essential difference, which seemed to get lost in immediate existence, is reset in *appearance*. Appearance determines the immediate through the latter’s relation to or its difference from its negative self; we have already discussed this in relation to Kant’s theory of appearance. Appearance certainly exists, but its existence is not the issue so much as what appears through its transparency. Appearance is, as Hegel says, “the unity of “shine”, reflection (i.e. essential mediation) “and existence” (i.e. essential being, the immediacy of essence)

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<sup>24</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 123.

(GW XI, 342; Miller 500). Appearance is not here a sort of *false show* which only refers away from itself to something else and in its determinacy does not even reach immediacy. Appearance is rather, as Hegel has it, a “*real shine*” (GW XI, 341; Miller 500); it is determinacy laden with content in the form of essence mediating itself. Kant thinks that in the realm of the theoretical we do not get beyond appearance; which does not mean, however, that we cannot deal there with real determinacy, with objective truth. The point is that we cannot have theoretical objects without their essential self-mediation, that we can only address them in the framework of the distinction of essence. For Kant appearance is the concrete synthesis of intuition (immediacy) and concept (mediation), but it is simultaneously the synthesis of the totality of all appearances, of the conditions of the possibility of experience as such, with experience *hic et nunc*, i.e. of that immediate experience with this existence here and now.

The syllogism of experience (and all experience is an immediate syllogism) comes to a conclusion when this existence appears as derived from the context of the totality of experience; it concludes when this immediate given is a part of the experiential whole. Whole and part constitute the first form of the *essential relation*, i.e. of a structure in which the differentiation or shining of essence breaks itself down into two sides of a disjunction which determine each other and in whose middle appearance appears. The two disjunctive sides of the essential relation are always one that is determining and one that is in the process of being determined, while both remain in mutual reference to each other. Initially the whole determines its parts, it sets them as what they are. The whole however is not itself something set, not even by counting the parts together. If we once again rely on Kant to explain this, the whole, the horizon or “context of experience”, is not itself an experience or an appearance, but only the determining in-itself of the determinate appearances, their pure potentiality. This is why the relation of whole to part moves on into the relation of force and its expression, of what lies *within* the things as their essences determining them to that to which they are set as the expression of this interior. We are already familiar with the relation of force and its expression from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The important thing here, just as with the relation between ground and existence, is that the inside or the force can only be what is actually determining for the expression or the set appearance if it is in its determination nothing other than that. The force which does not express itself or the inside that does not transit into an outside is precisely no force at all, not a determining factor, but something determined by another force, something external to it. The thought I believe I have within me but which I cannot express is merely external to me; it comes down to the same thing whether I mindlessly recite thoughts taken from elsewhere or if my own thoughts are so alien to me that it

never comes to an articulation of them. One can flatter people by saying that everybody is an artist and the flattery will not miss its mark if one adds that it's just that most of them are hindered by external circumstances most of the time from giving expression to this their "genuine" essence. One can also say that most people are hindered most of the time by *inner* circumstances from merging their outward appearance with their inner essence into a conclusion, into a unity, as artists, so that the truth is that this essence is completely *external* to them, which is why most know nothing about it most of the time. Again, a third example, one can say of a person that he has a religion merely externally, which normally means that he is a hypocrite. But is it really different to say of someone that he has religion only internally? With the one who has religion only outwardly, we notice that he has no religion at all; in the case of the one who has religion only internally, as a private matter, we do not even notice that he has a religion; in fact, we see in the same way that he too has no religion. In both cases the appearance is not equal to the ostensible essence; the essence is not the determining factor or it is not what it appears to be. *Actually* religious or *actually* an artist is only the person in whose existence the essence actually appears. The concept of actuality is precisely the concept of the concrete unity of inner and outer. Actuality, actual reality, does not refer away from itself to anything else, it indicates only itself; it shows itself and nothing else.

Hegel introduces the category *actuality*, heading up the third section of the logic of essence, with the following definition. "Actuality is the *unity of essence and existence* and in it *shapeless* essence and *baseless* appearance—or persistence without determination and plurality without foundation have their truth" (GW XI, 369; Miller 529). Actual reality is the togetherness in the relation between the determining factor and the factor that gets determined, which means it is really just a *self-relation*. This is an important determination for several reasons and it must be kept in mind in what follows. It enables us to distinguish actuality from existence, which as we saw initially refers only to a relative being *externally* related to the ground, so that on the one hand it did have a ground, but on the other it had no ground at all, in which case it was at most itself a ground for another existence. The self-relation of actual reality in contrast exhibits ground and existence in their effective togetherness. This is exactly why Spinoza called God, as Hegel points out, he "whose essence includes his existence", "*causa sui*", his own cause of himself.<sup>25</sup> Something which, like existence, depends upon an external ground is in this sense not really 'actual'—exactly in the sense in which we say of someone who only has

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25 Spinoza, *Ethica* 1, Def. 1.

external grounds for his religiosity that he is not ‘actually’ religious. Actuality is more than existence, which is why Hegel’s philosophy, a philosophy of actuality, is so much more than any existentialism could ever be. Actual reality is initially then the essence that relates itself to itself, the essence of essence, and in this formulation it is important to read the first ‘essence’ as a verbal noun, as a form of activity. For Aristotle actuality is ἐνέργεια, *energeia*, which literally means *being at work*. For Thomas Aquinas the actually real actuality, God, is the *actus purus*. Actual reality is also for Hegel the actuality, the dynamism of essence, not simply the being equal to itself or the existence set distinct from its essence. Actual reality is sufficient unto itself and all the searching after what is really actual aims precisely at this, what fulfils itself and is not given by another actual reality. Actuality is an immediacy, but an immediacy that emerges out of the mediations, out of the essential relations. Not itself relative, actuality is the absolute and so Hegel calls the first more detailed determination of actuality the *absolute*.

The *absolute* is a category we remember from Hegel’s time in Jena and which then already had the meaning of totality as well as another feature very important in our present context, that of overcoming reflection. Hegel questioned whether the philosophy of reflection really was capable of giving expression to totality and of overcoming the laceration, the fragmentation of existence. The absolute is something reflection cannot set, for the absolute *per definitionem* only sets itself. In that sense all the terms that come with reflection perish in the absolute; for reflection the absolute is only negatively there, only when reflection falls silent. It is often said that actuality cannot be grasped by our concepts, for it lies far beyond them. But the absolute is not simply closed off to everything else. It is initially undetermined, because the essential relation between determining factor and determined factor is no longer applicable here, so what we have is the absolute as pure self-determination. Hegel puts it in the following terms.

The simple solid identity of the absolute is undetermined, or better: all terms of *essence* and *existence* or of *being* as such as well as those of *reflection* have dissolved into its identity. This is why *determining what the absolute is* is done negatively and the absolute appears to be nothing but the negation of all predicates and utterly void. (GW XI, 370; Miller 530)

In completely banal terms, the absolute is what stands beyond all relation and hence that to which one cannot ‘refer’. One cannot point to the absolute or to actuality, because the relation of pointing already includes a differentiation. The absolute is not something shown but instead a kind of *self-showing*.

What the absolute is should be formulated; but such formulation cannot be a determination nor an external reflection generating its terms, instead it is the *exposition* and indeed the absolute's *own* exposition and only a *showing of what it is*. (ibid.)

Actuality in the strict sense of the term is exactly not what we immediately point to, but what shows itself to us. In this respect the absolute or the actual is not closed off at all and only to be addressed *per negationem*; it is immediately *manifestation*. Hegel comprehends all immediate actuality in this sense as externally underivable manifestation or self-display. Whatever actually displays itself does not admit the question as to its ground, for it is itself a ground and indeed the ground which simultaneously appears. We recall that Hegel in the *Jena Logic* started from the assumption that knowing as such is, prior to all differentiation of knower and known, an underivable first principle. Even he who says he understands nothing has already understood what understanding is. Reason as such is always presupposed even when no determinate rational knowledge is arrived at. The statement that the absolute or actuality is *manifestation* says initially nothing other than this: cognition is there in advance and is not brought into the world by us, for the obvious question otherwise is how knowledge is supposed to happen if we start from pure unknowing? Hegel famously said that reason is actuality and vice versa. We understand now that this sentence does not mean that each arbitrary 'existence' in its finitude is already immediately 'rational'. One can refer to the perhaps rather paradoxical sentence that in the empirical world actuality is rarer than one might think. Kant says it is not to be found in the empirical world at all, because that is a world only of appearances, of correlative existences, but not one of manifestations referring themselves to themselves, i.e. not one of simple *revelations*. Nevertheless, actuality is not completely alien to the empirical world. It is ultimately the *light* in which everything that *is* appears, in which everything that *is* is *revealed*. Grasping something according to its actuality means seeing it in the light of its own self-relation, not merely by illuminating it from without. This is why for Hegel actuality is also in itself already the *concept*, for in the concept the self-relation of the matter is set as manifest—but that comes later.

Looked at from the essential relation, actuality is the transition of the inner into the outer and as such in complete generality self-display or manifestation. This transition is simultaneously immediate unity and a unity of two sides, just as we encounter in every relation an immediate unity and a difference overcome. In this sense actuality takes the form of being and has difference within it. The actual reality that merely *is*, i.e. as immediate being cut off from its essential mediation, is just coincidence, *contingency*. Contingency is the

actuality that is only grasped “as a *being* or *existence* in general” (XI, 381; Miller 542), which does not present itself as a totality, but only appears at points. Now, immediacy is only the one side of actuality that has forgotten its mediation. We say of anything actual that it is also *possible*, and that means it has a mediation *by itself*, not due to another. *Possibility* is nothing other than reflected actuality or its doubling in reflection, which makes of the contingent, against the background of this differentiating reflection, in one sense the actual that is possible and in the other an actuality that is merely a possible one, so that another could take its place that is just as possible. Both actualities lying in *possibility*, A and not-A, are immediately *different* actualities by virtue of their content, not because of their form of *contingency*, which is what they have in common. The actuality determined by content is now the real one to which a real possibility must correspond, not merely, as in the case of contingency, possibility in general. Real possibility now transits into actual reality, just as determinate ground turned into determinate existence, no longer just externally or contingently. Real possibility is the actual possibility of the matter, i.e. from its presence follows immediately the actuality of the matter and, indeed, with real *necessity*. Real necessity is as yet contingent, because it is dependent on the condition that real possibility be fulfilled by many contingencies. This contingent necessity, however, is already a self-display of the self-relation of the actual reflecting itself within necessity *realiter* in immediacy. It is the self-producing, self-displaying self-relation itself in all this that is underivable, the *absolutely* actual. The absolutely actual *overcomes* what is relatively or really actual into a relation just as, according to Spinoza, absolute substance or God has all external determination only as a *mode* of that substance standing beside it. But then the absolutely actual is also identical with its possibility; it does not have that possibility outside itself. The absolutely actual is the negativity negating itself as such, which is no longer a passive *relatum* and so cannot be fixed as simple position or negation; this is exactly why the absolute was unutterable for reflection. But the absolute exposed and explicated itself; it related itself within what is different from it absolutely to itself and this is the absolute relation, the necessity not refracted by any immediate reality.

Life, our preferred model for the speculative relation, can help us once again here in our brief account of these terms and conceptual relations. The individual living thing, the real individual of a species taken in its simple immediacy, is simply contingent and not absolute, and yet life does assert itself within that individuality. Its possibility lies precisely in the fact that life has conclusively merged itself with the individual into a unity, even though it is only a possible living thing whose disappearance makes no difference to the reality of life at all. Still, the individual living thing is not only reflected in life and possible

from life, much more importantly it is also related to other living things and here lies its own real possibility. It is its real determination or its real actuality that makes it what it is. It is what it is because it has this particular father and mother or because it finds that other living being and eats it. The relations of living things among themselves are thus no mere relations of distinction, i.e. of contingent coexistence, but also ones of real determination, i.e. relations of necessity. Moreover the necessary relation of the living things among themselves is no mere existence, but their determinate life itself; life is thus an absolute actuality lying within this necessary relation and manifesting itself therein. The absolute actuality of life is coextensive with its possibility; i.e. life is the pure self-relation and to that extent not grounded in something other, e.g. in what is not living. Only the existence of the individual living things may depend upon an external ground, but their life relates only to itself; it is as life the autonomous concept. When Hegel says that absolute necessity and freedom are the same, he means that only the self-grounding concept, *causa sui*, is the autonomous or free concept. This holds for the infinity of the logic of being and it holds for life, it is valid for reason and for absolute subjectivity as such, with which the logic of the concept will begin. What Hegel does not mean is that one can re-interpret determination without more ado as being free. On the level of the determinations there is no freedom. Freedom begins where determination ends and self-determination takes over. Even Kant recognised that qualified freedom was only actual as autonomy or self-legislation. For Hegel every self-relation as such is just as much a form of absolutely necessary relation as it is one of immediate freedom. Now in the framework of the logic of essence freedom appears neither as a setting nor as *being-for-itself*, so the remaining categorial determinations of essence, those of the absolute relation, are still categories of necessity not of freedom.

Under the heading "The Absolute Relation" Hegel briefly discusses the terms we know from Kant as the categories of relation, i.e. *substantiality*, *causality* and *reciprocity*. These three categories are already forms of implicit self-determination, that is of the realisation or the execution of absolute necessity. With absolute necessity we have a being, an immediacy that is simply reflection or relation. Thus in terms of the absolute relation all being is understood as relation, all being is a reflection of itself in another and this is the production of its self. *Substance* is the immediate unity, the totality of this relation or this self-relating; Hegel calls substance the "absolute power" (GW XI, 395; Miller 556), because it is the determining power in contrast to what is determined, the powerless accident, which substance sets and to which it sets itself opposed. The common image says that substance is what definitely persists,

the being that sustains itself in the flux of accidents; but all we have is once again the simple difference of essence, namely that between fore- and background, existence and essence. In the substantiality relation, as it has emerged not from the logic of appearance but from the logic of necessity, all *being* is already situated *in* the *relation* or in self-relating; this is why substance does not relate only incidentally to the accident it opposes; rather substance is the setting of this difference so that substance and accident are moments of the same rank in the relation of substantiality. In this sense substance defines itself as *two* substantial moments, which definitely form *one* relation in which they are substantial; it defines itself as two matters, a first and a second, as *ur-matter* (*Ur-Sache*—cause) and effect.

*Causality* appears initially to be external to the substances as if it did not relate to them immediately but only as it were to their surfaces. This is why the search for the last causes can be extended for a very long time resulting in the infamous “*infinite regress* from causes to causes” (GW XI, 402 f.; Miller 564). There is indeed more to the relation of cause and effect than that. Even in the motion of the infinite regress each cause is also understood as an effect, as the other of itself, if not initially at least in the same respect. Suddenly here the cause produces not effects, but causes; when the learner does not learn, then, as Aristotle well knew,<sup>26</sup> the teacher has not taught; the learning of the learner (as passive) has in a certain sense become the ‘cause’ of the teaching of the teacher (so the cause was active). The cause that does not produce an effect (a passive substance), but rather a cause (an active substance) can just as well be said to produce a reaction, so what it in fact produces is a relation of correlative determination in which ultimately the different substances are but different moments of one and the same totality, of a single relation of *reciprocity*. The relation of *reciprocity*, which conceptualises this inner doubling, the absolute mutual relating of the moments or their mutual contradicting, is thus a systematic structure, an ‘objective reflexivity’ that closes itself off towards the outside. In fact it has no outside except for an ‘inner outside’, an outside that can be integrated, with which it is explicitly internally differentiated and is the life of difference. Each of its moments is the whole, each relates in the other to itself. What is decisive here is that the category of reciprocity, if still on the basis of the objective logic, thinks autonomous determination. Autonomous determination is the self-differentiation of the totality into its moments such that each of these moments is itself that totality; it is a process of determination which, as it becomes present or transparent to itself, is already the *concept*.

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26 Aristotle, *Physics* Γ 3, 202 b 4 ff.

Although like all terms of the *absolute relation*, reciprocity derives from manifestation, it is initially considered completely objectively. So anyone new to Hegel's development of the categories might well wish to ask how the concept and with that subjectivity—the form that knows itself as reflexive, the form manifest *to itself*—is supposed to emerge from the category *reciprocity*? Reciprocity gave rise to a closed systematic structure in which all distinct moments are themselves each determined by each other and by the whole. There is always an asymmetry to the thinking of *substance*, as it were an incline of conditions from substance itself down to accident, and *causality* on its own brings us only into a progress of the bad infinity, a regress in the sequence of causes and effects. In contrast, the relation of *reciprocity* is a self-differentiating whole relating through all its parts or moments again only to itself, while the parts or moments relate in their others again only to themselves. Each moment is thus inherently the whole, for it is set by the whole while simultaneously realising it concretely. On the other hand, each moment is also overcome into the whole, in its immediacy it has no other meaning than that of the whole, which is only present in its parts or moments in each case in determinate form. The whole that gives its determination to itself, however, is the self-determining whole, an autonomous form—one thinks of the concept of the organic in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*—which is just as subjective, i.e. self-referential, as it is substantial, i.e. presenting itself in differentiated determinate being. The unity of this form is one that exists immediately as a plurality, in particularity, while the determination, which is the *content* of this form, is immediately reflected into the unity, making the whole, as one could say, an ideal-real or real-ideal entity which as such is already the existing concept. *Concept* means here initially only that in all plurality of appearance or determination we do indeed have only one and the same reflection-into-itself or *relation to itself* and in that we have actual comprehension as inclusion. In its pure and undiluted form, this relation to itself is given in all differentiation as the form *I*, self-conscious subjectivity, a form Hegel immediately draws upon at the opening of the logic of the concept. This should not induce us to forget the provenance of the concept from what we can call the 'objective subjectivity' of the *relation of reciprocity*. The autonomy of the concept has its 'prehistory' in objective reason. Still, the concept that is not only *in itself*, but also *for itself* and free is initially what we ourselves know ourselves to be as the category *I*. And so we have arrived at the topic that must now occupy us, Hegel's *concept of the concept* which is to be thought of in terms of freedom, of self-determination and of inner logical transparency.

## 6 The Goal in the Concept

The third and concluding part of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the subjective logic or the *Doctrine of the Concept* is at once that part of the whole work which at first glance contains what one normally looks for in a work with the title "Logic": an account of the subjective forms and functions of comprehending, judging, inferring and concluding, a theory in complete generality of the forms of thought in which the world reveals itself to us and in which we make ourselves understood to each other. Of course the previous categorial terms were also forms of thought; emphatically so in the case of the terms of reflection like the principle of identity or the logic of the ground and of grounding. With the objective thoughts or terms that we considered in *being* and *essence*, however, it was always a question of forms of thought in which the subjectivity or self-referentiality of thinking was concealed. Concealed once, as in *being*, in the immediate determinateness of the matter itself; and concealed once more in *essence* in the character of laws of thought as such. In the latter thinking in contrast to being was certainly already grasped as the active force doing the determining and not just the matter being determined, but thought was to itself still only objective—as *this* ground or as *that* appearance—in which it was thus set without being able to grasp its setting as a free determinate form of itself. Neither in *being* nor in *essence* did reason recognise itself as the midpoint of either the given or the reflected determination. In the entire objective logic thinking proceeds in the name of necessity, whether that of a merely given necessity or of a necessity as such in its own nature, but not in the name of that self-conscious freedom which is inseparable from the concept. The necessity of thought does not get lost in the *concept*. Now it is enclosed in the self-consciousness of the free concept and upheld in the concept's own knowledge of itself as the root of all things. The concept does not run after the things; it is prior to them. In other words the concept is the presence of reason to itself, which up to now was reached only symbolically in the things, given as well as reflected, i.e. only in fragments. This third beginning the *Science of Logic* makes with the concept is perhaps best characterised by saying that we have now reached a structure that makes the relation of thinking to what is thought explicit as thought. The thinking of *being*, just like that of *essence*, was immersed, lost in the object under consideration. That of the concept in contrast is right from the start the comprehension of the object; which means that the object is still in play (for the concept is no abstract or empty form), only now this object is in the medium of subjectivity. Thought here enters into the intelligibility of the matter, which certainly does not cease to be the matter or

substantial content, just as for Hegel the concept as such emerges from the absolute relation, or in general terms from substance.

Two things have to be kept in mind in the transition from the objective to the subjective logic. First, we are now dealing with a new and more complex structure in which the matter's being-for-us, its openness is thought of as an integral moment of its selfhood and in which from now on a strong correspondence between objective and subjective reason obtains. Second, this certainly does not mean that the forms of the subjective logic are *mere* forms, into which in principle any arbitrary content could be inserted making the concept itself just a product of the abstraction of thought and not the inner reflection of the matter, drawing out its rationality in the form of subjectivity. For Hegel the logic of the concept or the subjective logic is not the realm of caprice in formal abstractions. What moves into action here is substance subjectively *overcome* without remainder, the realm of reason transparent to itself. It is now in its own self-transparency that at last reason completes its relation to itself and develops in the forms of the subjective logic nothing other than the laws of self-transparency. Hegel says that the third part of the logic as a totality is about the concept of truth (cf. e.g. GW XII, 26; Miller 592–3), and this claim is immediately understandable when we consider that it is about the self-revelation of reason, about the correspondence between knowledge of the matter and material necessity. Truth is the agreement of objective determination with the concept, or more precisely it is the agreement of the objective with the subjective concept, i.e. it is the knowledge that it is one and the same concept that lets the matter unfold itself in objective necessity while simultaneously letting it become intelligible in subjective form. It is the *concept capable of truth* which brings a thing into emergence as inherently consolidated being or appearance and simultaneously renders the same thing subjective, pure form and thought, a self-relating object. This comprehensive dimension of the concept in Hegel's philosophy, its dimension of the logic of truth, must be held firmly in mind from the start in order to understand that the third part does not simply attach a theory of subjective forms of thought to the *Logic* after the objective forms have all been exhausted. In fact, this part is where objective thinking too is brought to completion by showing it to be a moment of the concept and of the truth. This itself makes clear just how Hegel's subjective logic sets itself apart from all formal logic even without his methodological principle of conceptual genesis in the self-application of the categories and in general his commitment to reflexive knowing. Formal logic *per definitionem* treats the forms of thought only as forms not as subjective reflection of the matter itself; it treats the forms of thought as abstractions that are produced when one disregards specific contents, but not as constitutive forms for the

self-relation of determinate content as such. Formal logic thus remains stuck in the realm of *essence*; it thinks in terms of laws of thought, but does not think the things as thoughts. It claims that there are laws of thought and beside them also many other givens; but for Hegel there is nothing that is not itself already inherently concept, just as there is no real concept that is not the reflection of a substantial being, that thus is not itself inherently already *determinate being*. Hegel's *Logic* is thus in its third part an intensional logic, a logic of content, or better a logic that goes beyond the form-content opposition, which we recall from the discussion of the *ground* as a figure of essence; it postulates the *self-overcoming* of this opposition as a condition for the possibility of thinking truth. In the concept, as Hegel understands it, being and thought come together or the immediacy of determination and the immediacy of reflection are understood as reciprocal mediations of each other. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* we encountered Hegel's statement that substance is to be grasped just as much as subject and we found in this 'simultaneity thesis' something of a fundamental programme of Hegel's philosophy that seeks to be neither dogmatic imaging, not substance philosophy, nor any kind of thinking in empty subjective forms, not reflection philosophy. This fundamental programme is also pursued by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*, where it hinges on the transition from *essence* to *concept*.

In a great introductory piece entitled "On the concept in general" before entering upon the logic of the concept as such, Hegel recapitulates the genesis of the concept sketched at the end of the logic of essence; this is necessary because logically there cannot be any kind of immediate 'intuition' of what the concept is. That there are such things as concepts is only in a very superficial sense a fact; indeed, accepted as such it leaves the concept completely misunderstood. The concept (taken in the strictest sense) has no qualitative or determinate being, nor does it merely exist, for it is more, it is *actual* and has to be understood as such in its internal and external necessity. Concepts are never for Hegel mere imaging forms with which reflection 'operates' in order to capture 'facts'. The concept is rather the vital energy of the substantial relation itself and in this sense it has something of the εἶδος, *eidos*, Aristotle's concept of species. As such the concept is an internal yet manifest relation of recognition, whose inner telos it is to be manifestation-for-itself, self-conscious subjectivity (and in this sense the "I think"). The *particularity* of the concept lies in its character as determinate concept, since in it "being in-and-for-itself is immediately a *setting*" (GW XII, 16; Miller 582). The concept is self-determining content, it is self-mediation and as such also absolutely determined and differentiated. Determination in the concept is self-determination so that determination here is equal to itself; it is just identification with itself

and in that lies its *universality*. Thirdly, then, the identification of the concept with itself in its self-determination is a relating of itself to itself, thus bringing out the *singularity* of the concept. Hegel says that this, the unity of particularity, universality and singularity, is the *concept of the concept*; he goes on to explain these formulations by means of a remark. Hegel writes:

The concept, in that it has grown into such an *existence* that is itself free, is nothing other than the *I* or pure self-consciousness. I certainly do *have* concepts, i.e. determinate concepts; but the *I* is the pure concept itself which has attained *determinate being* as concept. (GW XII, 17; Miller 583)

The first step for anyone looking for an illustration of the concept has to be the concept 'I', one nobody who understands it would claim is 'unsaturated' or 'nominalist'. The three moments of the concept—universality, particularity and singularity—can be demonstrated in the *I* without further ado in concrete unity thus fulfilling the concept itself. First, there is no problem in linking the most universal and the most singular or, in this case, most individual that a person can say of themselves in the *I*, just as one readily hears in the word 'I' the moment of self-determination, i.e. of opposition and particularisation. Everyone is an *I* just as each is *I* in their determinate relation to all, i.e. to everyone else. With the term *I* then we have a self-conscious living being presenting itself as what all self-conscious living beings are, namely universals; then again it is also distinct, a living being setting itself in opposition to what is not-*I*; and finally it determines itself as unmistakably singular, individual, as this particular person. All three moments are simultaneously elements of self-consciousness as such, for self-consciousness is a knowledge about me, my universal identity in the form of an opposition, in relation to particularisation against which I maintain myself in my relation to myself, as an individual. Hegel continues from the last quote:

I... is *firstly* this pure unity relating itself to itself not immediately, but because it has abstracted from all determination and content and brought itself back into the freedom of unrestricted equality with itself. Thus it is *universality*, unity that only is unity with itself by virtue of that *negative* behaviour which appears as abstracting and has dissolved all determination within itself. (ibid.)

The simple thought *I* can thus be said to designate something like the world-null-point, the pure form through which all finer determination of subjectivity

as well as of objectivity must pass. This is also why Kant, as Hegel emphasises, emphatically speaks of the “I think” as the “original-synthetic unity of apperception” and why Fichte found in the I setting itself the general foundation for all subsequent determination. Hegel goes on to say:

Secondly, I is just as immediately as self-referential negativity *singularity, individuality, absolute determination* setting itself opposed to what is other and excluding it; *individual personality*. (ibid.)

The I is, as we said, opposition, self-assertion or, if we think back to the recognition struggle in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, practical behaviour in general against another I. The I and the concept are here, to emphasise it once more, not simply factors in an external comparison. Hegel understands the philosophy of subjectivity founded by Kant in its core as a philosophy of the concept; Kant's principle of synthetic unity is autonomous reason relating itself only to itself and to that extent for Kant too the I is no mere image, no longer a ‘thing’, but has become an actual unit of active reason, its own mediation of itself. Conceptually comprehending something now means *overcoming* or translating it into its rational form, which then comes down to *overcoming* or translating it into the form of the I, or again elevating the concealed cognition hidden within its substantiality (its logical character) to a self-conscious cognition. Hegel puts it in the following terms.

*Comprehending* something consists in fact in nothing other than that I turn the object into *my property*, that I penetrate it and bring it into its *own form*, i.e. into the *universality* that is immediately *determination* or into the determination that is immediately *universality*. The object in intuitive perception or even in the common imagination is still *external, alien*. Comprehending transforms the *being-in-and-for-itself* it has in perception and imagination into a *setting*; the I penetrates it *with thought*. How it is in thought, in fact, is how it is [truly] *in and for itself*; in perception or in the imagination it is but an *appearance*; thinking overcomes the *immediacy* with which it initially comes before us, which is how it makes a *setting* out of it and its setting is its *being-in-and-for-itself*, its *objectivity*. Thus the object has its objectivity in the *concept*, which is the *unity of self-consciousness* into which the object has been taken up. (GW XII, 18; Miller 585)

If we think once again of the example used above of the book that runs through all three of the logical statuses, that might make what Hegel is saying here

clearer. The 'penetration by thought', the 'transformation' of the book pulls it out of the immediacy of intuitive perception or appearance and makes it into a setting which in the same moment is understood or known to be the *being-in-and-for-itself* of this object. Once the book has been read and understood, it becomes objective reason, an expression of the other I but still of the I in general; it is part of one and the same intellectual world of self-conscious life. It might be objected that the book is tailored as an example because it is so clearly a question of a manifestation of self-consciousness and one could even say of the incarnation of the I. Hegel responds to such misgivings so effectively with his insistence on the distinction between an 'unspirited' and a spirited form of the concept. We can make this distinction clear by reference to the essentially non-self-conscious I of our bodies and actual self-consciousness, which would be the pure I. For Hegel there is the "blind" and there is the "thinking" concept; the former in the "state of nature" and the latter in that of the "spirit" (GW XII, 20; Miller 586). Independent of both however is the logical form of the concept as such, the concept as autonomous form. The concept is in general the self-referential unity of existence and determination, of *setting* and *being-in-and-for-itself*, that unity, as we have already said, of subjectivity and self-display that is both self-preservation and substantiality. Thus the concept is, as Hegel then emphasises against a possible Kantian narrowing of the perspective, not simply a subjective or external "synthesis" (GW XII, 22; Miller, 589), no more than it is exhausted in the formulation "*actus* of the self-conscious understanding" (GW XII, 20; Miller 586). Taking the concept as an act of the understanding locks it into a psychological perspective (which, as Hegel sees it, is Kant's big problem).<sup>27</sup> On the other hand that also leaves it stuck like formal logic on the level of essence, confined to the form-content opposition, it cannot grasp the being reproducing itself by itself with its own mediation. Hegel's concept logic does not offer techniques for making ourselves understood in communicating 'about' things. It seeks rather to be a theory of the fulfilled logos, of saturated speech and of the very possibility of uttering the truth about things as such. We recognise here the echo of the old programme of the 'matter-of-fact phraseology' and indeed in Hegel's final statement on this programme in the third and last edition of the *Encyclopaedia* in 1830 only the "living spirit of actual reality"<sup>28</sup> is recognised as the true content, as the strength and power of the concept. The fact that it is not possible to speak the truth about things or the world without passing through the form of the I, through that of self-

27 Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* III, where Hegel calls Kant's term 'transcendental philosophy' "barbaric", TW 20, p. 337.

28 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 162 at the end of the Remark.

consciousness, is due to the irreducibility of subjectivity which Hegel always assumes. Subjectivity, however, is not the source of the pollution of what is being-in-itself; it is not about rendering determination one-sided through a contingent, external perspective on it. Subjectivity reveals the constitutive self-relation or reflexivity of all determination and that is what makes it for Hegel a *principle that reveals the truth*. The subjectivity of the things and the subjectivity of the concept answer to each other, in which certainly it is always assumed that the concept here does not seek to be something that is determinate right from the start and external to the things. In his subjective logic Hegel seeks conceptually to comprehend what is indeed *prima facie* the rather strange situation that we address the things from our own standpoint and that the things respond accordingly to us, that they answer us. In the realm of the concept we are, in fact, only at first sight alone with our thinking and our language. Being, which at the beginning of the *Logic* was in every respect completely dumb, now becomes in a real sense quite talkative, while reflection, which in the logic of essence sought to establish the abstract domination of the ideality of the terms of thought, now finds itself *overcome* into the free relation of thinking and being, into the domain of an I that has a world and of a world that responds to an I.

Initially, before its unfolding, the whole domain is the concept as such, pure, self-referential, autonomous form. This “pure concept” is, in Hegel’s words, “absolute infinity, the unconditioned and the free” (GW XII, 33; Miller, 601), the purely negative power against all merely immediate determination of being as of thinking; it is what is simply universal. By a universal concept one normally understands a concept that remains the same in uncountably many instances and which is thus not affected by the numerous differences arising between all the instances. The concept ‘animal’ comprehends in this sense all possible animal species, mammals as well as fish and birds, crustaceans as well as insects. It is commonly said that a universal concept such as ‘animal’ is produced by a mental operation, i.e. by abstraction so that concepts in general are ‘mental objects’. But this only says (psychologically) that self-consciousness, the “I think” is really existing comprehension as such, which diverts attention away from the question of the real meaning of the concept, for example, that of the animal. The point is that worms, mussels, whales and cows are not supposed simply to be brought under a common *name*; the universal concept is supposed to give expression to an inner continuity, to a *negative unity* of them all defined in such a way that if it were eliminated none of the living things comprised ‘under’ it would continue to exist. Thus, the universal concept of the animal includes the characteristic of vitality in autonomous motion identical in and common to every individual animal of whatever species. The (true)

*universal* is clearly initially nothing other than the *pure self of the matter* and designates the power of the self, absolute negativity against all external determination; it is, as Hegel says, “the *free* power, it is itself and encompasses its other too and it does that not with *violence*; instead it abides in that other tranquil and *by itself*... relating itself to *what is different from it* only as it would to *itself*, it returns to itself inside the other” (GW XII, 35; Miller, 603). In this formulation we immediately recognise what distinguishes the conceptual universal from the self-equality of being that vanished in becoming as well as from the identity in reflection that remained purely ideal and could not be found in any really existing thing. The conceptual universal is *active self-continuity* throughout difference, *negation of the negation* as an immediate principle of a given being as genus. A self-relation in the differences, this universal is thus also “not a void” but, and this may be found surprising, “it is concrete” and has “by virtue of its concept *content*”—just as the concept of life indeed does not designate an abstraction, but the concrete content of that which is generally meant by the term ‘animal’, which is only defined by it in the first place. On the other hand, “the abstract”, Hegel says, is only an “isolated, incomplete moment of the concept and has no truth” (ibid.). It would be an abstraction, for instance, to try to comprehend animals and other beings under the merely apparently universal concept of *something* or of *being*—we know by now that neither *being* nor *essence* have the significance of universals and, properly understood, can only in abstract terms be called “universal concepts”. It is of course always possible to regard animals as *somethings*, but the logic of being demonstrated that being ‘is’ only as vanishing and that animals are rather essences than determinate beings. Then again the animals are not simple essences as opposed to existences, but are rather ‘actual essences’ bearing their universals in themselves demonstrating *in concreto* that they are ‘living things’ and are thus only *materialiter* universal. It would be an abstraction to say that the universal of the human being is that it belongs in the class of objects whose length is less than 2.5 m—which is a perfectly respectable ‘universal’ in the sense of nominalism, i.e. an arbitrarily chosen mark set to meet particular requirements which has nothing whatsoever to do with the content, with the reality and character of humans as human beings. The world and humanity can so easily suffer violence under the abstractions, under these pseudo-universals when they are deformed by them.<sup>29</sup> The true universal is never indifferent to what falls under it; indeed, precisely speaking nothing ‘falls under’ the universal, rather everything belonging to it sustains itself within it, strengthens itself through the

29 Cf. Hegel’s essay *Wer denkt abstrakt?*—Who thinks abstractly? (1807) (GW v, 379–387; TW 2, 575–581), which is not discussed here.

universal and thus finds its self—at once inner self and outer self and both in equal measure—as freedom within it. The true universal is, recalling the early writings, as Hegel so strongly emphasises, “free power” and even “free love and boundless bliss”. Present in the form of the immediate certainty of a great and encompassing affiliation, it is a total feeling of life and of reason, both of which remain true powers without doing any violence to anybody.

The universal concept as free self-relation in all differences cannot now transit into *its* other, into the *particular* under the influence of any kind of external compulsion; it cannot be rendered finite in the manner of the transformation within being into determination, i.e. it cannot *pass over* or simply *transit* into the particular. Hegel sees the relation between universality and particularity in the concept instead as one of “free self-determination”, in fact as a “creative” relation. Determination in the concept is not a limitation, but only a way through to its own content, to its particularisation. Life is initially absolutely continuous with the particular living being, reason with the particular usage of reason and language as such with particular language forms. The universal or genus does not vanish in the particular or the species and the species is in each case only a particular form of the *universal distinguishing itself from itself*. Strictly speaking for Hegel in the relation of the concept there are only two species, universal and particular. The universal distinguishes itself from itself, i.e. it makes itself into *one* species against an *other* species.<sup>30</sup> The universal concept of motion, for instance, is completely divided by the disjunction into motion and rest, i.e. the disjunction between the two species of the setting ‘motion’ and the non-motion opposed to it, in which one of the distinct species is also the whole conceptual universal. The concept of I is similarly divided into I and non-I, in which the setting I—opposed to the non-I and thus opposing itself to itself—is then simultaneously the concretely determinate given I, what one could call the empirical I, now standing in double opposition, first to the non-I and then again to the universal I that is devoid of oppositions. No further division into species of the I is possible, nor would it logically make any sense, since it cannot extend the logic of the I. One can certainly say that on the level of opposition, infinitely many different I’s may encounter one another; a closer look shows that they do not differ as I’s, but only in terms of different aspects of the non-I, for instance, according to specific qualitative or

30 The schema of the particular concept could be given thus:  $A : (A \mid B)$ , where  $A \mid B$  means particularisation and A is the ‘dominant’ universal. It is relatively easy to insert terms from the entire *Logic* into this formula, which is so fundamental to Hegel’s dialectic. In *Being*, ‘something’ (A) and ‘other’ ( $A \mid B$ ), and in *Essence*, ‘identity’ (A) and ‘difference’ ( $A \mid B$ ).

quantitative features, so that the opposition or the particularisation is always only that of the setting I, the I that does the setting, and the non-I opposed to it. Nature pursues particularisation in an incomprehensible multiplicity—in the living beings, for instance—instead of representing difference in the logical purity of the dichotomy. Hegel ascribes this to the “impotence of nature, incapable as it is of representing or holding fast strictly to the concept and instead running away with itself in this blind multiplicity” (GW XII, 39; Miller 607). To nature’s credit one can say that, at least where the maintenance of the diversity of species is important, it comes into its own and in most species it represents them in what one can call the logically relatively pure opposition of male and female individuals. However that may be, what is important for us is that the difference, the determination of the concept once again is drawn not from outside but from within, from its self. The definition of something traditionally gives the *genus proximum*, the universal, and the *differentia specifica*, its particularity. The two are not supposed to be brought together in an external synthesis. The thing being defined is thought of rather as the universal existing in the specific difference and simultaneously as the opening of a specific difference to the universal. The *actual* I is not simply the character of being an I as such; it is the active I that sets itself against the non-I. This active (in that activity also essential) I is, however, simultaneously the *restoration* of the universal I in the particularity; it is the definiteness of the I resulting from its own determination and in that sense the universal relating itself to itself throughout difference. Now, the universal that restores itself in and through particularity is already the *singular*, just as we have seen in our example that the I opposing the non-I is the empirical I also in the sense of singularity.

The *singular* or individual is usually regarded in the logic of abstraction as what cannot be grasped by the concept. Hegel takes a different view and calls it “the depth in which the concept grasps itself and is set as concept” (GW XII, 49; Miller 619). The individual is the set unity of universal and particular. In this it is the totality of the concept as the completed realisation of universal and determination, while this latter has now become self-referential, maintaining itself within and against the totality. Life that did not pass over into being the life of single living things would be something less than vital life, indeed, no more than a formality. Reason that is only postulated as the universal essential nature of man but not yet grasped within individual consciousness would be something considerably less than reason in the full sense. Both examples show that it is once again abstraction which tears the distinct moments of the concept apart and comes up with a life that is not the life of living things and a reason that does not recognise itself. “In singularity”, and hence also in the “principle of individuality and personality” (ibid.), “the *inseparability* of

the determinations of the concept, the true relation is *set*"; it is the "coming together of each with its other" (GW XII, 50 f.; Miller 620). It is now clear that the universal concept, I, can only be known by one who already finds themselves as being that concept, for the concept is only what finds itself emerging from out of self-differentiation. The negation formed by universal and particular against each other is in this way negated and set as a relation of one and the same *self*; in other words, the single individual is the concept "in the form of *absolute negativity*" (GW XII, 49; Miller 618). "Absolute negativity" means here that all positive accessibility taking the concept as possessing "extension", or as abstract, has fallen away, for the concept is set as pure self-mediation, thus relational in strong terms; the concept is now *living difference*. It also means that what is actual as this free power, reflected into itself and subjective, is simultaneously what is truly true, that which can do nothing other than affirm itself in every negative relation. Precisely at the point where it eliminates the image of the universal as lying somewhere beyond the reach of the individual, the absolutely negative nature of the (individual) concept is seen as the affirmation of something inherently (not only relatively) transcendent. Plato had what is in this way inherently transcendent in mind with his concept of the *good* and Plotinus with his of the *one*; Hegel finds it in the concrete freedom of the subjective, in that which gives what is substantial a *self*. It is not true that 'man' as a genus term would be more than the individual who realises the genus concept "absolutely negatively" by *overcoming* it into its own selfhood. Put more emphatically, it is not true that the genus concept itself would have its ontological dignity in something other than in its vanishing into individuality. We can for this reason also say that individuality is the *telos* of the universal. Hegel writes, "The return of the determinate concept into itself means that it has the character of being in its *determination* the *whole* concept" (GW XII, 51; Miller 621). Only in the individual does the universal reach its wholeness, manifesting itself in the motion of its return, in its subjectivity. This is why *humanity* as such does not have a concept of itself, but only the individual person has it; it is also why it is never the collective that commits a specific act, but always only the self-motivated individual. And since it is individuals who have that concept and commit these acts, this refutes the view that the individual is something that can be pointed out, an object of *deixis*. "Pointing out", says Hegel, indicates a "this" (τόδε τι, *tode ti*), but not what is conceptually individual as that which has its mediation within, not outside it (cf. GW XII, 52; Miller 622). The individual cannot be indicated or shown, for *it shows itself*. Nobody can really point to the I, nobody can deictically explain "life, spirit, God" (GW XII, 42; Miller 619), nor freedom, language, reason. The power of absolute negativity is what makes these matters self-mediating revelations.

Singularity is a provisional endpoint in the development of the concept. In it the concept is immediately determined, immediately then also an abstraction of the totality of the concept. In the individual one could say that the concept's own differentiation has made itself independent and now exists as many autonomous concepts. The individual divides the concept in its immediate existence, but not in the sense that the different concepts are present like many things, somethings and others standing beside each other; instead the different concepts are tied together by their common conceptual origin and as such stand in relation to each other. The constellation in which the concept's moments stand thus in external and simultaneously internal relation to each other, i.e. the concept that comprehends itself through another concept is the *judgment* or proposition. Initially this happens in the general form of the individual relating itself to the universal via the conceptual distinction, i.e. in the form "the individual is the universal"—"the I is a person". This form is commonly expressed as "the subject is the predicate", in which the subject in its valence distinct from the predicate is initially nothing other than the moment of singularity and the predicate that of universality. So we proceed on the assumption that the range of the predicate is greater than that of the subject and regard the expansion of knowledge in the proposition as lying in the fact that a single subject is drawn out of its isolated singularity and declared to be a universal. "The rose is a plant", for instance, mediates the subject with a broad range of other subjects with which it shares one and the same universal. At this point Hegel discusses the vital distinction between the proposition and the sentence. A sentence also formally possesses a subject and a predicate, but in terms of their values both positions designate only individuals, so the relation here is not a genuinely conceptual one. Let us consider for example the following two statements which sound so similar. (1) "The true essence of things is their idea" and (2) "Plato said that the true essence of things is their idea". Now, only (1) is a proposition, while (2), a historical statement on what Plato said, is only a (contingent) sentence. The situation is similar with these two statements: "the rose is a plant" and "the rose stands in the new vase". Here the difference lies in the fact that for the rose it is very important whether it is a plant or not, whereas it is completely irrelevant to the rose which vase it happens to be put into. Hegel uses a very different example. The news that "my friend N has died", again a purely informational statement, is initially only a sentence, but it can be used as a judgment (by a doctor perhaps) when there is a question "as to whether he is really dead or only appears to be so" (GW XII, 56; Miller 626). Here again only in the second case is the subject explained by the predicate and it does not merely appear to be a definite relation from the viewpoint of another. The distinction Hegel makes is for philosophy itself

very important, at least to the extent that it must be capable of distinguishing itself from accounts in the history of philosophy. *Philosophy* as the unfolding of the concept *qua* science must make judgments. The history of philosophy, in contrast, at least if it is not (like Hegel's own history of philosophy) itself conceived of as the unfolding of the concept by means of making judgments, but takes the traditional approach of relaying anecdotes, consists in fact of sentences of the type "I slept well last night". In this latter case it is sufficient to refer to the fact that Descartes found what he said, shall we say, in the work of Duns Scotus and so was relieved of the effort of really thinking through his own thoughts for himself. What Hegel taught in Jena, for instance, might be dubbed 'metaphysics' and completely missing the fact that this modish word might be completely incorrect here. If sentences just add names to each other, the judgment seeks to enlighten the individual about its particularity in the light of that universal which is its inner ground.<sup>31</sup>

The first form of the judgment is the proposition of qualitative being (*Dasein*), the *existential judgment*, in which an immediately given subject is bound together with an immediate (positive) determination in the predicate. It is, for instance, said of Cajus that he is learned. A different kind of judgment of qualitative being is the statement "the rose is fragrant", which has the form "the universal"—namely the rose, which also possesses many other properties—"is something singular, by which it is not exhausted" (GW XII, 62; Miller 633). Clearly the two immediate moments of the judgment, which have exchanged their values in this latter case, cannot really be equivalent to each other, since the singular is simply singular and not a universal, the universal a universal and not a singularity. This means in general that the positive judgment as such, namely considered according to its values, is always untrue. This discovery is the secret of philosophical scepticism, while forgetting it again is that of positivism. With that discovery however, with the discovery of the inability of the positive judgment to be true, the proposition moves on to the negative judgment, which seeks to express a more adequate truth by *negating* the association between the singular and the universal. The negative proposition undermines the copula, the set immediacy of the concept in its relation which also refers to the judgment's ground in the concept; what the negative judgment designates is only the need for mediation, the need for the concept.

31 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 167 Remark. For more details on the difference between sentence and proposition in Hegel cf. Thomas Sören Hoffmann, *Die absolute Form. Modalität, Individualität und das Prinzip der Philosophie nach Kant und Hegel*—Absolute form. Modality, individuality and the principle of philosophy according to Kant and Hegel, Berlin and New York 1991, p. 62 footnote 36.

Determination via *simple* negation however still lies in the same predicate sphere that constituted the foundation of the positive proposition; whoever says “the rose is not red” still says it has a colour, even if it is only an indeterminate other than the one negated. The positive content of the proposition “this rose is not red” remains “it has a colour”, just as the positive content of the “simple” scepticism that claims “we cannot know the truth” remains “there is such a thing as truth”. The *infinite* judgment, which one could also call the ironic judgment, completely breaks off all relations between subject and predicate; it lets the subject appear *only* as subject, the predicate *only* as predicate, and in that in fact it prevents both from appearing with these values at all. Hegel’s theory of the infinite judgment underwent significant changes over the years—starting with the *Jena Logic* through the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *School Logics* in Nuremberg and then again in the *Lesser Logic* of the *Encyclopaedia*. In the *Greater Logic*, the *Science of Logic*, however, the negative infinite judgment, as in the forms “the rose is not an elephant” and “the understanding is not a table” (GW XII, 70; Miller 642), is distinguished from the positive variety, which sets the universal as a universal and the singular as a singular, thus stating of the rose that it is a rose and of the plant that it is a plant. In the infinite judgment the inadequacy of a merely immediate or *qualitative* mediation of the concept’s moments *universal* and *individual* is clear; the qualitative property of the first judgment, the existential judgment, is its finitude, its untruth. The next step then has to be about relating the two sides to each other not in direct qualitative terms, but through an explicitly mediating activity.

This is what happens in the *judgment of reflection* which, on the one hand, *quantifies* the subject term, so that the proposition as such is distinguished as singular, particular or universal, while on the other hand making the predicate a *universal of reflection*. Reflection predicates are distinguished in the morphology of the German language chiefly for adjectives by the ending “-lich” (English e.g.: -ly, -ful, -ish) and for nouns with the endings “-heit” or “-keit” (English e.g.: -ness). Examples we find in Hegel include “alle Menschen sind sterblich” (all humans are mortal) and “dies oder jenes ist nützlich” (this or that is useful). Another, “die Rose ist rötlich” (the rose is reddish) indicates that its specific colour is given not simply empirically but includes an element of conjecture, of reflection. For Rudolf Carnap logical positivism was faced with the ‘problem’ of the ‘disposition predicates’ typified by the following example, ‘sugar is water soluble’. It was thus concerned with propositions that were not reducible to observation statements, but contained a universal derived by induction from thought. Indeed, the reflection judgment always relies on investments of thought or of the concept, even when it takes the form of the universal

proposition, investments that never correspond to positive givens. A statement about “all humans” is in positivist terms unjustifiable and for Hegel it is always a result of a form-activity of the proposition generating its own specific content, not simply taking it up from somewhere else (cf. GW XII, 73; Miller 646). The reflection judgment certainly does not express any *inner* identity of subject and predicate; it does not claim that one of them inheres in the other. That happens only in the *judgment of necessity*.

The first form of this judgment is the *categorical proposition*, which seeks to express a substantial identity, just as Plato wanted to do in our example when he said, “the essence of things is their idea” or when it is said of a ring that it is made of gold. The schema of the categorical judgment as the identification of essence is that of the substantial relation, just as the schema of the *hypothetical proposition* that makes its own necessity explicit is the relation of causality. The hypothetical proposition—if A, then B—considers one being as the truth of another, it carries the one over into the other, thus asserting essentially a continuity between the different terms. In contrast, the *disjunctive proposition*—something is either A or B—brings out the discreteness asserting both to be species of one and the same genus, of one and the same concept, which now reappears as concept in the proposition in the final form, the *conceptual judgment*, standing as the measure of the judgment itself. Conceptual judgments are for Hegel the *genuine judgments*, propositions that really demand a power of judgment in that they relate the being of a matter to its *ought*, its immediacy to its telos or its self. The content of philosophical science is eminently expressed in this form. Conceptual judgments are, as one could put it in what is perhaps Neo-Kantian terminology, never merely judgments of fact, but always also judgments of value; value, of course, not in the sense of external or partial evaluations that would involve reflection judgments, but in the sense of the eminent predicates: good, bad, perfect, truth, beauty, etc. In the sense then of propositions that judge an action to be evil, an apple to be good and healthy for one, a work of art as great art and so on, and which thus consist in much more than the assertion that the rose is red, the apple tastes good to me, thus also in much more than a statement of rules defining something to be art when some criterion is fulfilled. The concept judgment is initially the *assertoric* judgment, which has the deficiency of making only immediate claims, merely assuring and thus remaining, however subjectively certain, contingent. It can be countered by the opposite judgment containing very different assurances, which shows that it is a *problematic* proposition. The problem is removed by making the more narrowly defined concept of the subject or its inner character explicit so that the predicate is justified. Hegel’s example is, “the house thus constituted is good” (GW XII, 87; Miller 661), which

in fact now gives us the *apodictic proposition* that grounds itself in itself, the assertion of the expert and the knowledge of science. The apodictic judgment effectively expresses the whole judgment twice; once as subject and then again as predicate; the example sentence clearly states that a house constituted in a given way is a true house, i.e. the concept of a house is fulfilled in this house, because it is exactly as the concept requires. This is how in concealed form in the apodictic judgment a conclusion has already been reached or has been proved and we have reached the theory of the syllogism. It must be said that Hegel's theory of judgment has not yet received the detailed attention and appreciation it deserves as not merely an extensional, but as a thoroughly intensional theory of predicates and predication. Hegel develops here a profile of determining speech that is well suited to defending human speech against mechanisation and to directing attention to real differences in our access to the world via the judgment. This is even true when the judgment *per definitionem* still belongs to the finite concept and has not yet been rendered fluid in orientation to the idea. The language of the idea can only accept the judgment in the form of the *speculative sentence*, which means already having arrived at the form of the syllogism.

The *sylogism* is, as we have seen above,<sup>32</sup> already in Kant the form of reason and of the idea; it is also for Hegel "*what is rational*" (GW XII, 90; Miller 664) and this means that in the syllogism the unity of its elements, which are determined very differently from each other, is brought out and expressed. We can also say that in the syllogism being, which in the judgment is always merely given in the immediacy of the copula, *mediates*, which means that it is released from the form and made explicit and is present as a *known* being. By representing subject and predicate as two reflections of one and the same close relation the syllogism gets over the finitude inherent to the judgment in its *presupposition* that subject and predicate are different, which it makes in order then more or less factually to relate them to their inner unity. The simple reflection proposition "Cajus is mortal" represents mortality as something that comes from outside, as it were, and simply happens to Cajus, as something that might perhaps not apply to him and whose truth or correctness can only be confirmed when Cajus actually dies. The syllogism, on the other hand, in which the proposition "Cajus is mortal" is the conclusion, means that it is Cajus' being Cajus itself that makes him mortal, that it lies in his humanity as such to be afflicted with mortality. This is why, as Hegel says, in the syllogism the concept returns to the judgment—the concept here as the undivided unity of its moments—and

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32 Cf. p. 105 f. above.

it is the real content of the syllogism to represent the reflection of the given matter into itself as the inner unity of the matter itself. Hegel says “everything is a *sylogism*” (GW XII, 95; Miller 669). Of course, this does not mean that the things exist as logical figures. The claim is that a thing in the manifold of its existence is not merely externally synthesised in its determinations, but that everything *consists* precisely in the fact that it is a systematic totality dividing itself into its different moments in order to reproduce itself from out of these differences and in this way uniting itself in conclusion with itself. We can thus say that while in the judgment the I, subjectivity, runs through the finitude of its existence and is in that only one or the other determinate I, in the syllogism it regains its original self-determination and utters its specific being as its selfhood. The I of the syllogism is no longer one that is factually determined only by external conditions or adversities like mortality, but instead it concludes in a genuinely personal wholeness, in an, as it were, autobiographical totality, an individual totality in which mortality too is reflected and set as an integral moment of that which constitutes this totality. This is why Hegel’s theory of the syllogism is not what it has been since Aristotle, its founder, namely just another topic of formal rationality. In the *Science of Logic* it is so much more; indeed, it has ‘ontological’ significance throughout, but here precisely in the sense that with the syllogism we have arrived at the emancipation of objectivity from the concept, at a whole new *being-for-itself* of the truth.

Hegel’s theory of the syllogism distinguishes three principal forms. The *existential syllogism*, the syllogism of qualitative or determinate being, deals more or less with the Aristotelian theory of the syllogism; then comes the *reflection syllogism*, in which the so-called extremes previously assumed to be distinct “shine” into each other; and finally the *sylogism of necessity* features the universal, as a moment of the concept, emerging as the middle term bringing the extremes together in conclusion. The existential syllogism is the immediate one and at first purely formal; all pure deduction in the understanding, which, as Hegel says, tends to be “boring” (GW XII, 95; Miller 669), happens on the level of this syllogism. Conclusive deduction here is essentially about contextualising the individual, for which the manner of its emergence out of its embedding in the close relation to others into its own determinate being is also demonstrated. The first figure of the syllogism is traditionally represented by the following schema:

MP The human (P) is mortal (U)  
SM Cajus (I) is a human (P)  
 SP Cajus (I) is mortal (U).

This claims that the individual (I) is, by force of its particularity (P), a universal (U), or Cajus is, by virtue of his humanity, mortal: I-P-U. The defect of the judgment of existence, namely that the contradiction between subject and predicate could not be eliminated by the copula, is here overcome by the midpoint, the *medius terminus*, which has made the mediation of the two sides explicit. This syllogism contains two premises which as such are unproven. First comes the premise P = U, the statement that humans are mortal, and the other is the premise I = P, that Cajus is a human. So these premises have to be proved in the subsequent figures of the syllogism of existence. The second figure, in fact third in the traditional order, is usually given in the following form:

MP   Cajus (I) is mortal (U)  
MS   Cajus (I) is a human (P)  
 SP   At least one human (P) is mortal (U).

This is a syllogism of the form P-I-U, in the conclusion it always arrives at a particular judgment, which at least validates negation. The second premise is still unmediated in this syllogism, while the first (I-U) is the result of the first figure. This figure is essentially the basic schema of the reflection syllogism, since in the conclusion, in our example with the restriction 'at least', it shows what reflection as external mediation can accomplish. Its "*objective meaning*" is "that the universal is not *in and for itself* a determinate particular", but only so "*via individuality*" (GW XII, 100; Miller 675). The third (traditionally the second) figure, finally, completes the existential syllogism.

PM   Cajus (I) is mortal (U)  
SM   No god (P) is mortal (U)  
 SP   Cajus (I) is not a god (P).

The syllogism form is here I-U-P; both premises are justified already and the conclusion is the "derivation" that up to now was lacking of the *minor proposition*, the immediate existential syllogism. Mediation in this case is accomplished by the universal, which actually means that in formal terms this syllogism prefigures the genuinely scientific *syllogism of necessity*. Only in formal terms does it do that, it must be emphasised, for it is easy to see that the universal as middle term here binds the extremes together without really determining them; the mediation is not yet a real one. The "truth" of this mediation is rather the "mathematical syllogism", Hegel's fourth figure; U-U-U, which expressed in words is "When two things or characters are equal to a third, then they are

equal to each other" (GW XII, 104; Miller 679).<sup>33</sup> In this syllogism the concept moments, the qualifying value statements, have disappeared, which makes it a "completely external" (ibid.) deduction. In fact, however, this syllogism does also encompass the reflection into itself of mediation or deduction, which corresponds to the "circle of mutual presupposing" (GW XII, 105; Miller 681) formed by the figures of the existential syllogism. Reflection, at first objective reflection in the circle of syllogisms and then the "free" reflection of formalism, has now come to know itself as the power behind the syllogism having shed its qualitative character.

The *reflection syllogism* thus regards the syllogism relation not simply as given, but as an essential relation; the extremes here *shine* into each other. This holds already for the first of these 'quantifying' syllogisms, the *syllogism of totality* (*Allheit*).

All humans are mortal  
Cajus is a human  
 Thus Cajus is mortal.

This is "the syllogism of the understanding to perfection" (GW XII, 112; Miller 687), clearly a "deception" (GW XII, 113; Miller 688), a *petitio principii*, for the mortality of Cajus is tacitly contained in the first premise, which means the first premise presupposes the conclusion. It is thus only valid when the conclusion actually applies, when Cajus does not happen to be a human who is nevertheless immortal. Reflection tries initially to draw a conclusion from quantitative relations, here from the relation of all to one. It soon learns, however, that it has to take the individual at first under the universal or to represent it as a universal. This happens in the *syllogism of induction*, which draws the conclusion of the particularity of a universal from individuality, more precisely from all individuals (U-i,i,i,...-P). The problem of induction is well known in the philosophy of science; inductions are never drawn from "*perceptions*" but from "*experience*" (GW XII, 114; Miller 690). They are syllogisms that form the material of perception in advance according to the logic of the "making of experience", as Kant might have put it, and this is also the case when their result remains problematic. Like its successor, the *analogy syllogism*, the

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33 The fourth so-called Galenic figure in the tradition, which exchanges the positions of the terms in the two premises with respect to the first, Hegel regards as "utterly pointless" (GW XII, 104; Miller 679). An example in the mode *bamalip* would be: (1) All humans are living things, (2) all living things are mortal, (3) some mortal beings are humans.

induction syllogism can be considered as expanding knowledge, but both are weak syllogisms, which really speaking only have heuristic value and do not yet exhibit the activity of the concept in its differences. If induction relies on the bad infinity of empiricism and not on the concept, at least the analogy, with the form I-U-P, is refracted through a middle term that obstinately retains its ambiguity between individuality and universality. Whoever believes that “all Germans are conscientious” can have “particular” experiences with many individual Germans, which result from the fact that the individual German is certainly a German, but just as much an individual.<sup>34</sup> Kant called induction and analogy “the two syllogism forms of the power of judgment”, which are “useful and indispensable for the expansion of our experiential knowledge”, but “since they only provide empirical certainty”, have to be used “with caution and prudence.”<sup>35</sup>

The concept as active and determining appears in the *sylllogism of necessity*, in its figures of the *categorical*, *hypothetical* and *disjunctive* syllogisms. The *categorical syllogism* represents the individual according to its inner nature, thus for example the rose as a plant or Cajus as a being endowed with reason. The goal here is a substantial identity, a logical continuum, a “common essence running through” (GW XII, 120; Miller 697) the terms, which, however, certainly does not merge completely in conclusion with the individual whose essence it is. The fact that it is this Cajus here who is the being endowed with reason is contingent; many others are too and the problem is to know why precisely he should be so. As the hypothetical judgment collects together scattered realities under a single form, so the *hypothetical syllogism*, well-known under the name *modus ponens*, formulates the necessary close relation between separate extremes. We deduce that if Cajus is a human, then he is also a rational being; still his humanity is only contingently or factually given and the universal is not yet the determining factor in the whole relation. Only the last form, the *disjunctive syllogism* knows the matter completely as determined by the concept, i.e. as self-determining. All natural numbers are either odd or even; now, two is an even number; therefore it is with necessity, not just contingently, not odd; it is what it is from the immanent determination of the system of natural numbers. Likewise Cajus is what he is and what he is not by force of his objective nature and not merely contingently. In this example too it seems that the formalism of deduction falls away from what reveals itself to be self-determining. The result of the syllogism is a new being

34 The syllogism thus deduces I-U/I-P via a broken, not mediating, middle term (*quaternio terminorum*).

35 Kant, Jäsche Logic § 84 with Remark 3, AA IX, 133 f.

for the concept, its mediation into immediacy, immediacy *understood in itself* or *comprehended* immediacy, which is also known as *objectivity*.

## 7 Objectivity and Idea

Commentators have long wondered why Hegel included a chapter dealing with objectivity in the subjective logic.<sup>36</sup> Is not objectivity the exact opposite of subjectivity, which is supposed to be the topic under discussion? And does not the material treated in this chapter, mechanism, chemistry and teleology, obviously fall in the philosophy of nature? The answer to these two questions is relatively easy. *Firstly*, objectivity is indeed the first *other* of subjectivity and it belongs in the subjective logic precisely because only through determinate opposition to subjectivity is it defined as a *function* of the concept and without that opposition would simply not exist. There is no object without a subject. The latter is its prerequisite, which was what Kant taught us. It is of the greatest importance to understand that *objectivity* is not simply *being*, neither is it any of *determinate being, reality, existence* or *actuality*; it is that immediacy we saw emerging from the concept above. ‘Objects’ do not simply lie before our eyes; they are results of the disjunctive syllogism, they are mediations of science. Only the popular misunderstanding confuses the result of science (e.g. the atom, the genome) with the immediately given things or self-revealing actuality. All false scientific blind faith consists precisely in the suppression of the result character of scientific knowledge, in its illegitimate hypostatizing often accompanied by mystification. This, of course, does not mean that the results of science are arbitrary. On the contrary, their emergence from the syllogism means that they are established with necessity. The ‘is’ of the conclusion is a very strong assertion that no longer tolerates arbitrariness; any trace of arbitrariness prevents the syllogism from finding closure in a conclusion and then it is merely subjective reflection. Moreover, the objective does not come in bite-sized chunks or handy ‘points’, but is only to be had as a *system* of objects—also a result of the principle of disjunction—which is constitutive for all objectivity. No-one can be part Copernican and part Ptolemaic; hence the vanity of all attempts to wring residues of so-called mythical relations from a world already interpreted on scientific principles or somehow to insert them into that world—as if there is a choice here at all. The fact that the scientist has *no* choice between regarding his object methodically or mythically is precisely

36 To mention only one of the better known authors, A. Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*—Logical investigations, Leipzig 1862<sup>2</sup>, vol. 2, 345 ff.

the immediacy of objectivity generated by the concept that compels disjunction, the immediacy of objectivity that is Hegel's goal. And this compulsion has, as we said, system; it unfolds itself into a *world*. Objectivity understood as the world that subjectivity has as such and constructively develops then makes it just as understandable why, *secondly*, objectivity certainly does not belong in the philosophy of nature. *World* and *nature* are not the same thing: the first is a logical, the second precisely an 'antilogical' concept and certainly not the concept of an 'objectivity' as the first *other* of the subject. One can take it as the programme of the natural sciences to translate *nature* into *world*, i.e. logically, as it were, to fence nature in, to reconstitute it as conceptually comprehended immediacy. But then this certainly does not mean that the natural sciences would have a concept of the logical status of nature as nature; they do not have that and moreover, they do not need it. What they do need is a concept of the generation of objectivity as an identical world transparent in its identity. Nature, which *as nature* is neither simply identical nor transparent, stands rather right from the start under a completely different exponent, that of *alterity*—which will be discussed below. The following formulation should suffice here, science is the constitution of the objective world, but not of nature; and that is precisely why the theory of objectivity, in contrast to that of nature, belongs in the *Logic*.<sup>37</sup>

The logic of objectivity is that of the self-compelling conceptual determinacy establishing itself simultaneously as an immediate determinacy. Hegel compares this logic with that of the ontological proof of the existence of God, whose Cartesian form can be seen as oriented to a concept of the objectivity of God. The rationalist Descartes certainly did not believe that God is an object in the "*context of external experience*" (GW XII, 129; Miller 707), nor, indeed, that God could be thought of in terms of reason as a form that needs to be subjectively filled; Hegel speaks here of the "self-determination of God into being" (*ibid.*). At the same time it must be remembered that objectivity is initially only the *immediacy* of the concept, not yet the "absolutely negative" mediation of itself with that, with its external reality. It was Spinoza's error to have taken the objective for the divine, to positivise God instead of reserving the logical status of the idea for him. Understanding God as objectivity, i.e. as the first *other* confronting the concept, as the first other of subjectivity, means to determine him in the status of the not-I. The common reproach of pantheism made against Spinoza should be replaced by the reproach of objectivism. Hegel, by the way,

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37 Not without reason did Kuno Fischer call "the logical development of objectivity *cosmology*", defining its thesis or the concept of the world as the objects' "unity determined by the concept": *Logik und Metaphysik oder Wissenschaftslehre*—Logic and metaphysics or theory of science, ed. H.-G. Gadamer, Heidelberg 1998, p. 156.

himself refers to the fact that the objective displays its logical limit from the start in being the real object of the “infinite struggle” of the I in the constitution of its true self-consciousness (cf. GW XII, 131; Miller 709). Objectivation is a condition for the possibility of the concrete self-demonstration of subjectivity, although it certainly also includes the (Spinozistic) danger of the loss of self, smothering life in the world of objects.

Object worlds certainly do not develop in isolation without alternatives, but specifically as competing interpretations of the objective whole. The three leading concepts of objectivity already given are systematically mutually exclusive and as such have the tendency to be universal explications, each to be exclusive representations of the world objectified by the subject, i.e. setting itself opposed to it. The categories *mechanism*, *chemism* and *teleology* give their own closed ‘world pictures’, world views, a term which, by the way, does not refer only to the initially suggested realm of nature, but can just as easily refer to the social sphere and to that of spirit and mind. At the beginning of the modern period it was not only, as with Descartes, that nature out there was regarded as essentially external, as only to be grasped in mutually external relations. Hobbes even took the political realm to be one of individuals mechanically reacting to each other. In his *Elective Affinities* Goethe describes relations between individuals in terms of chemistry and Herder introduced the concept of the *spirit of a people* (*Volksgeist*) to try to approach cultural history in terms of an organic model. The logical sequence of the three forms of objectivity is then, taken in summation, a series of successively vanishing externalities, the successive recovery by objectivity of apparently genuine, but in fact deceptive or, at best, inadequate forms of the objective.

*Mechanistic* thinking, which approaches the matter completely from the standpoint of the not-I, i.e. the third person, always appears with the claim to be most ‘objective’. Mechanism sets the world under a form diktat covering both individual objects and the processing of the objects with each other as well as the law of objectivation itself. Mechanism can be credited with the introduction of the concept of *law* as such, of the abstract universal as a structural principle of the objective world, a decisive stage in the constitution of a truly objective world. We recall that the ancient world, especially the Aristotelian philosophy of nature, had no knowledge whatsoever of the currently prevailing concept of a *law of nature*. Leibniz insisted that mechanism is only the external explication of objectivity and in fact presupposes a specific metaphysics of the mechanical object.<sup>38</sup> The problem with mechanism is that it takes the realised concept only in its immediacy, but not as concept,

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38 Cf. e.g. Leibniz, *Antibarbarus Physicus* (1687), in Leibniz, *Philos. Schriften*—Philosophical writings, ed C.I. Gerhardt (1875–1890), reprint Hildesheim 1965, VII, p. 344.

i.e. as self-relation, as inherently mediated. This makes of objective thinking initially only *forgotten* subjectivity, which is subsequently restored on the pathway through *chemism* and *teleology*. The chemical object is, in contrast to the mechanical one, inconceivable without the relation to another and that holds also for “gender relations” as in “love and friendship” (GW XII, 148 f.; Miller 727). It turns out that even “bodies in space” are not only mechanically interrelated, but are essentially related to each other simply as communicating with each other for themselves. Now, determining chemical relations is always affected by external conditions and the chemical object does not of itself indicate what it is ‘in itself’. This character of being inherently mediated and thus sustaining itself and revealing itself as such takes us beyond chemism into the organic world view, *teleology*. Teleological thinking comes down to recognising the objective concept as a concrete goal, as a universal reproducing only itself in all its external relations. Kant also knew that there is no mechanical concept of life; still he remained firmly on the ground of mechanism, at least in theoretical philosophy, where we only have our lives in the mode *as-if*. It is true that Kant’s concept of teleology in the ‘doctrine of natural goals’ in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* claims that the outside in its total concept, i.e. realising itself as itself, is not really so external; even the death of the organic is the production of an identity, of an abstract goal, which in these terms is precisely not a possible mechanical object, but an actual reality of the “spirit”.<sup>39</sup> We can make this problem simpler and clearer by saying that on a purely mechanical foundation, there is no compelling division of external objects; objective division is in fact its own self-differentiation of each from each other, its “will to power” taking each other as the means for their respective goals, i.e. the means of their respective selves. Only in this perspective can we see that the truth of the objective concept lies in its power of relating, in its negativity, that its objective immediacy is just a moment of its self-relation, of its life.

Life is for Hegel the first category of the idea, i.e. of the concept in objectivity, in the world as a world of the restored concept. There is thus no strongly objective concept of life; attempts to grasp it mechanically, chemically or also (in its phenomena) teleologically come to grief on its character of being simply not amenable to positivising. We know what life is ultimately only from the inner perspective, by being ourselves living beings, not from supposedly objective models we construct of it. The idea as such is the adequate concept, the concept of a subjectivity answered by an objectivity, the concept of an I that has a body, that is the relation to itself even through the most external opposition. We have made good use of this immediate idea, *life*, many times

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39 Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 375 f.

already as the perfect example for Hegel's conception of a realised concrete universal. Now it is time to develop more precisely the determinations of life, namely that of the living *individual*, of the life *process* and finally of the living *universal*, the species. Living vitality is always the unity of totality and individuality and only as a total individual, only as individualised is it related to life as a whole. Every kind of immediate opposition, all externality of objectivity, vanishes in this relation, in the life process, indeed, just as consciousness turns into self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it is immediately overcome into self-relation and as such is a "fluid" moment. One could say that the so-called body-soul problem does not exist for the living, but only for the dead and on that level it is indeed insoluble. Life generates its own sense of being universal, of maintaining continuity through all difference, which recalls the last category of essence, *reciprocity*. This is what makes it the first, the existing species concept, whose *being-for-itself* is explicitly established in the second moment of the idea, in *knowing*, *cognition*. In cognition the idea gains inner self-presence and its content is now in general what soul, self-consciousness, spirit mean and in which we participate (as already in life) again only from the inner perspective, not through objectivation. If knowing has come to know itself in the *Science of Logic* as knowing, then the idea has become the knowing self-relation, realised cognition or the knowing I. The inner perspective, the only one for which cognition can be for cognition, appears to "make a circle", to designate something "uncomfortable", that doesn't happen when "a stone" is "thought of or when a judgment is made concerning it" (GW XII, 194; Miller 776) either to itself or to others; but then nobody claims that the stone is what it is in relating itself to itself or that it is actual knowing existing for itself. On the contrary, all attempts to grasp the *idea* as such, *life* or *cognition*, in any other way than in the "circle" of reflection lead ultimately to turning the world into stones and that is something with which philosophy can have no truck.

This is now the framework in which Hegel presents his logical epistemology as well as his theory of practical relation, namely that of the conscious goal relation. The task of the first is producing a close relation that can know itself as 'true', which (in analytical cognition) begins with the transformation of the 'stuff' of knowledge into, as it were, logical material and is completed in the (proven) theorem self-generated from definition and division which formulates "what is genuinely synthetic in an object" (GW XII, 220; Miller 806). The construction of theorems is thus not an 'objective' fact of a given world or at least taken in those terms it would be completely misunderstood. On the other hand neither is it a fact outside of any kind of world. It is rather the transformation of the world into a being that is more than its own immediacy, into its truth, its self-equivalence, its being as the presence of mind and spirit,

which as such certainly does not somehow stand accidentally 'beside' it like a mirror reflecting anything that comes along. As the realisation of the concept it is that world's most intimate, its highest expression. Hegel does not offer a formal epistemology, but an *ontology*, a *metaphysics* of cognition, which, given its *status* as existing cognition is the most concrete possible, the most powerful in forming relations and for that reason also the highest mode of being. This corresponds to Aristotle's praise for the incomparability of *theoria*; but then again it also does not correspond to it, because the dignity of Hegel's cognition does not derive from an external given thing, but from its *own* being and status. It is a metaphysical prejudice to regard being as an object of cognition as a higher kind of being than the being that is knowing as such; only the latter is, for God as for us, the being that is no longer alienated from itself and is quite simply *free being*.

The ground of practice is then nothing other than the knowledge that this highest being, that qualified freedom is in itself already realised, so that all that remains is for it to become real for us. The purpose is not really alien to the stuff of the world; the good is not to be induced in the world, for it is closely related to it already. The good is not an ideal which subjectivity first brings to the world; it is borne by the relation of the purpose to its mediation. The good is thus the universal medium in which the free development of the highest being is already moving, the corporeality of the spirit that knows itself in that embodiment as real purpose, as actually realised idea. This free motion of the highest being can only be superseded by self-consciousness, which it acquires from itself precisely as this free motion and highest being. This self-consciousness is the content of the *absolute idea*, of the method as the reflexive relation to itself in its differences, which now must be *expressis verbis* addressed. Hegel calls the method "the motion of the *concept* itself" and precisely in the "meaning" just now emerging into consciousness, namely "that the *concept* is *everything* and its motion is the *universal absolute activity*, the motion determining and realising itself" (GW XII, 238; Miller 826). It is obviously easy to denounce this as panlogism, but anyone who does that will also have to state clearly what concept of logic is assumed in that statement and above all what is not logic in it. The method in Hegel's sense is in fact the pure *logos*, the power of gathering the many into the one, now by virtue of the differentiation that has been carried out; it is precisely the endurance of the concept throughout that process without skipping any of it that Hegel calls *dialectic*. The immediately dialectical moment of the method is the self-differentiation of its motion, the simultaneity in the construction of *external*, "substantial" and *inner*, "subjective" spheres, through which "each level of *going-outside-itself*, i.e. of *further determination*, ... is also a going into itself so that more *extension* is in equal

measure *more intensity*" (GW XII, 251; Miller 841). Self-empowerment is only possible by empowering the world just as identity is only available as setting otherness free, subjective reason only as recognition of objective reason. The absolute method is thus radically different from the finite method of clever and well placed moves and holds; it is the inner transparency of self-mediation itself, "the absolute form, the concept that knows itself and knows everything as concept", which is why there is "no content" that "would stand over against it setting it as a one-sided, external form" (GW XII, 250; Miller 839 f.). Absolute form is the knowledge that is by itself clear and goes on continually clarifying itself, the pure activity of reason whose first example in the system the *Science of Logic* is intended to be. References to the method make an impression of being quite naturally separate from all material, merely assertive and at any rate too general. Neither are they understood when merely repeated, but only when grasped in the active practice of real philosophising.

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**PART 3**

*Berlin System*



At a well-known point in Goethe's *Faust*, the imperial chancellor responds to a suggestion by Mephisto to help him get out of his notorious pecuniary embarrassment by means of the "natural and spiritual powers of a talented man" with the following very pointed words.

Nature and spirit—we do not speak thus to Christians.  
We burn atheists,  
because such talk is highly dangerous.  
Nature is sin, spirit is the devil,  
Between them they foster doubt,  
their misshapen androgynous child.<sup>1</sup>

Both of them will occupy us in what follows, at least in the brevity required here, nature and spirit that is, as Hegel investigates them in the two great so-called real-philosophical (*realphilosophisch*) divisions of his philosophy. They, in that order, nature and spirit, followed logic already in the Jena system drafts, and this order is preserved in the *Encyclopaedia*; but they are also parts of the system that Hegel devoted individual monographs to—such as the *Dissertatio* and the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* of 1821—as well as discussing them *in extenso* in the great lecture series that proved to be historically so influential.

Hegel reached the zenith of his fame and influence at the Berlin university through his lecture courses and especially with those on topics in the philosophies of nature and of spirit. The lectures on the philosophy of nature supplied a great deal of new and explanatory material adding to the paragraphs of the second part of the *Encyclopaedia*, as can be seen in the *Additions* of the posthumous edition of Hegel's works produced by his students of the *Association of Friends of the Deceased*.<sup>2</sup> The lectures on aesthetics must also be mentioned

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<sup>1</sup> Goethe, *Faust II*, act 1, scene 2, lines 4897–5002.

<sup>2</sup> Hegel lectured on the philosophy of nature six times in Berlin. The first editor of the "Philosophy of Nature", Carl Ludwig Michelet (1801–1893), relied principally on the lectures of the winter semester 1823/1824, which he attended himself. The lecture notes of this course taken by Karl Gustav Julius von Griesheim (1798–1854) was edited by Gilles Marmasse for the *Hegeliana* series in G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über Naturphilosophie Berlin 1823/24. Nachschrift von K.G.J. v. Griesheim*—Lectures on the philosophy of nature Berlin 1823/24, lecture notes by K.G.J. v. Griesheim [Hegeliana vol. 12], Frankfurt am Main 2000. Also useful are the lecture notes of the course in the winter semester of 1819/20 taken by Gottfried Bernhardt (1800–1875), not used by Michelet for his edition, G.W.F. Hegel, *Naturphilosophie. Band 1: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20*—Philosophy of nature, vol. 1, the lectures of 1819/20, ed. Manfred Gies, Naples 1980.

here for they too subsequently had great influence;<sup>3</sup> those on the philosophy of religion and on the history of philosophy were also important.<sup>4</sup> These lecture series encompassed the entire realm of the absolute spirit in its three forms of art, religion and philosophy. Not to be forgotten, of course, are the lectures that in the nineteenth century probably gave Hegel his biggest audience and which did most to define his image, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* with their famous theses: “World history is progress in the consciousness of freedom” and “the *ultimate purpose of the world*” is “spirit’s consciousness of its own freedom and with that the actuality of its freedom”.<sup>5</sup> We will have to discuss the systematic locus of history as Hegel sees it, its location in the realm of objective spirit and in immediate association with law or right; but for a comprehensive understanding of Hegel’s philosophy it is important to remember that the realm of history for Hegel (very different from Marx) ultimately does *not* designate actuality in the highest sense. Hegel believes that the standard for all actual reality, and thus also for any kind of ultimate meaning and value in the life of the individual as of human communities, is only to be found in the realm of the *absolute* spirit. History as such, at least in its *immediacy*, remains devoid of concept and ambiguous—even though its material is freedom and its truth is right, law. This must be clearly stated here: only from the highest authorities of absolute spirit—art, religion and philosophy—can history ultimately be grasped as a space fit for human inhabitation.

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3 The edition of the *Aesthetics* by Heinrich Gustv Hotho (1802–1873) in the series produced by the *Association of Friends* still remains the first reference here. Rüdiger Bubner in his own selection from the lectures on the philosophy of art praised Hotho’s “ingenious edition” as an “astonishing” achievement (G.W.F. Hegel, *Ästhetik I/II*, Stuttgart 1971, p. 31).

4 Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*—Lectures on the history of philosophy, ed. P. Garniron and W. Jaeschke, 4 vols., Hamburg 1986–1996; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. by Walter Jaeschke, 3 vols., Hamburg 1983–1985.

5 TW 12, 32. Cf. e.g. *The Philosophy of History*, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, trans. J. Sibree, 1857, p. 33. The first edition of these lectures was edited by Hegel’s son Karl (1813–1901). The following edition is also useful: Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Weltgeschichte (1822/23)*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Ilting, K. Brehmer und H.N. Seelmann. Hamburg 1996.



## Philosophy of Nature

We have not yet arrived in the realm of the spirit, neither of objective nor of absolute spirit. The realm that awaits us after the *Logic* is that of logic immediately *overcome*, i.e. nature. What then does philosophy really have to say about nature? In the following our aim is to give the outlines of answers to at least three questions.

1. How does nature ‘result’ from the *Logic* or (more precisely) from the absolute idea—and in what sense can one speak of a ‘transition’ from the idea to nature?
2. What are the irreducible basic determinations or characteristics of what is natural as such—what is it that makes something a natural object and as such specifically distinct from a logical concept or a self-relation of the spirit? (Here we also have the question as to how philosophy of nature, which contemplates the naturalness of natural things, differs from its later offshoot, scientific physics or natural science.)
3. How does Hegel see a “*conceptually comprehending* treatment”<sup>6</sup> of nature organising itself? A rough sketch of Hegel’s philosophy of nature, as we have it in the *Encyclopaedia*, will be given in the context of the responses to this last question.

Many a thinking head has occupied itself with these questions over the last two centuries and they cannot be treated exhaustively here. Hopefully, at least the basic orientation required to find the answers will become clear.

### 1 Nature and Idea

Our first question concerns the relation between the logical idea and nature, between a knowing that is clear to or fully aware of itself due to itself on the one hand and the natural realm on the other; this latter a realm in which it is certainly not immediately clear in what form it ‘connects’ to the logical realm or whether it can be said to expand it in any way. The cosmos of the categories, that system of the terms of thought determining each other from out of each

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6 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 246.

other came to a close in the absolute idea and the full self-awareness of this closure was reached in it. The absolute idea is the philosophical method itself, which in its pure actual execution is the self-presence of reason for which everything is transparent, everything is reason and which is itself reason. In this respect Hegel calls the method the “pure concept that only relates itself to itself; it is thus that *simple self-relation* which is *being*” (GW XII, 252; Miller 842). Methodical thinking in Hegel’s sense is not simply thought formed in a particular way and certainly not formalised thought; it is a thinking that emerges from the presence of the matter, from the richness of the content itself to which it merely gives expression—we think again of the *conclusio* of the syllogism, whose copula is just as saturated with content as it is formally mediated. With its closure here the absolute idea, the method, reaches back to the beginning of the *Logic*, back to *being*, except that this being is now complete as relation—a basic motif of Hegel’s we know from the early writings—and more precisely as *self-relation*, *reason’s equality with itself* developed into all its completely internalised differences. Hegel says, “it is now also *saturated* being, the *concept comprehending* itself, being as the *concrete* and just as much simply *intensive* totality” (ibid.). Being was initially only the concept in itself, which is to say that it appeared to be merely an object to be approached by a consciousness external to it, a position it was not able to maintain. At the end of the *Logic* with the self-consciousness of the method attained, comprehension as such now stands as it were at the midpoint of all things and knows the things as they are comprehended by themselves, knows them as functions of precisely that reason it is itself and which in all content only recognises itself, relating itself to itself, i.e. the content is immediately reason. The question here is not whether any human being will ever arrive at this standpoint of absolute self-transparency, standing at the midpoint of the world and seeing everything through the eye of reason, or would be able to sustain this standpoint if he or she ever attained it. The question is not psychological or epistemological, it is posed purely logically. It is initially only about the concept in which the science of logic finds its goal and its completion. This goal, however, is something that it finds only in itself and in its self-knowledge; its goal does not lie beyond it, as if the *Logic* was somehow incomplete and forced to seek compensation for its inadequacy outside of logic. In his Munich lectures *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*—On the history of modern philosophy, Schelling understood Hegel to suggest that at the end of the *Logic* “the absolute spirit” or God himself externalised himself to become nature and thus, as Schelling claimed, to find “the grave of his freedom”; for then God would be the one exposed in nature to all contingency and all external necessity, he would “suffer in nature

and submit himself to a process from which he cannot extricate himself".<sup>7</sup> In fact, in no sense does Hegel suggest that the idea, much less the "absolute spirit" (God), at the end of the *Logic* simply hands itself over to nature or its processes. Absolute idea is not "subject", "substrate" or "stuff" of natural process, rather it confronts nature "absolutely sure of itself and at peace with itself" (GW XII, 253; Miller 843). It does not become other, rather, as one might say, it *par excellence* lets the other—that which in confrontation with the concept is other as such and precisely this is nature—confront it. This is why Hegel says at the end of the *Logic* with great emphasis that there is no real 'transition' from the idea to nature, no genuine becoming from one to the other (cf. *ibid.*). The notion that for Hegel the idea somehow mysteriously *becomes* nature is a prejudice that lies at the root of so many misunderstandings relating to the inner workings of the systematic progress after the conclusion of the *Logic*. It is even suggested that Hegel was trying to say that something not itself thought mysteriously emerges from out of 'mere thoughts', that philosophy comes down to a kind of telepathic magic, which by means of especially intense thinking can produce very concrete, even if possibly absurd and all too finite effects. First of all, the absolute idea is already *per definitionem* no 'mere' thought, not a form whose content is external to it; for as we know in the idea as the self-presence of the absolute form of reason, reason has become at once form, content and the relation between the two. Since it already contains a whole world, this excludes the notion that it is to be 'fulfilled' or 'extended' by something outside it. Another important point is that the relation between idea and nature can be grasped neither in terms of the *logic of being* as a real transition nor from the *logic of essence* as causation, as a relation of cause and effect. Causation can only designate a relation of necessity, but the absolute idea is a relation of thoroughgoing self-determination, it is the autonomous *freedom* of the concept and as such it can only reveal itself to be the determinate being of freedom.

It is not surprising then to find that Hegel does not speak of a transition but of the idea "freely releasing itself" into nature (cf. *ibid.*). An analogy to this relation could, within certain limits, be taken from the relation of the universal to the particular concept, a relation that can be applied to that between the absolute and the particular I, or to that between life and living things. The particular I for instance does not 'emerge' in the manner of a causal process from

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7 Schelling, *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, ww vol. v, p. 229 f. Cf. the English translation in *On the History of Modern Philosophy* by F.W.J. Schelling translated by Andrew Bowie, Cambridge 1994, p. 163.

out of the absolute, the universal concept does not transit into its particular determination, rather it determines itself freely to be that particular. Hegel speaks of a relation in which life as such stands in its determinate, qualitative being in this or that particular living thing or in which reason as such manifests itself in one or another concrete rational activity. Life and reason are the *idealities* of every particular living being and rational relation, but they are also the absolute premisses of the vitality and rationality of these instances in their separation. We can even extend the analogy so far as to say that the idea relates to nature as to its particularisation; then we can anticipate the further development that the existence of the spirit would correspond to the concept's moment of individuality, that thus spirit for Hegel is the idea concretely restored from out of particularisation, that spirit will be individuated and finally realised reason. At least we now understand the following statement of Hegel's in the *Encyclopaedia*, "the absolute *freedom* of the idea however is, that . . . in its own absolute truth it freely *decides to release from itself* the moment of its particularity . . . , the *immediate idea* as its reflection, as *nature*."<sup>8</sup> The idea 'opens' itself in the direction of what immediately is determined precisely as that which is not the idea, but the *overcoming* of the idea. Now, this opening can only mean tearing open its inner logical binding, its *continuity* with itself, and what corresponds to this opening or decision is the *discretion* of the logical, its dispersion or dissipation, which is nothing other than its particularisation. Here it is no longer only that of the concept, but of the logical totality itself, so that to which the idea opens itself will be a *totality* of particularisation, a whole *sphere* of the dispersion of the logical. Hegel also calls this sphere of particularisation, of immediate difference, this nature, the sphere of the "externality existing absolutely for itself without subjectivity" (*ibid.*) and the immediate *names* for this "external life", related no longer to itself but always to another, are *space* and *time*. Whoever says 'nature' has already effectively said 'non-relation', just as whoever says 'logos' has already said 'relation'. Even the common image of the absoluteness of natural reality derives from this moment of non-relation in all nature, its power of rejecting inclusion. According to that 'logic' of the imagination, vitality, the life-force, appears later and less powerful than, for instance, the *elements*—whereas in fact it is precisely in *life* that the elemental is subjugated, just as *knowledge* encompasses life and is the autonomous power of forming relations that goes beyond self-relation.

Space and time, the first determinations of nature negating relation, are for Hegel not (as for Kant) subjective forms of intuition, 'psychic' realities; as the

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8 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 244.

primary determinations of the natural as such, there is no natural object that is not conceived of as qualified by space and time. In space and time the logical idea has freely retreated into itself so that it thinks of space and time as nothing other than *as* its free withdrawal, as the specific vacuum of the midpoint relating itself to itself, which, however, exactly corresponding to the freedom of the idea, is a (negatively) free, immediate, determinate, qualitative, given being (*Dasein*). Thus we speak of 'free nature' and mean by that a given being inherently relating itself to itself and in a definite sense affirming itself in that, which is why it is considered irreducible. All life presents itself, as we know, by entering into particularisation in spatiotemporal and materialized formations in the concretion of vitality. These formations determined by space, time and matter are not simply life itself, but moments of its opening to its particularised determinate being. Philosophy grasps nature as what is conceived of when the universal of thought appears as the particular to which thought has particularised itself and as such keeps its inner standard and centre in thought. Thought thinks of nature against itself (against thought), as background, even if thought thinks of nature as what is immediately free from thought. In other words, nature is the *concept* showing itself to be *immediately devoid of concept*, which means, for instance, that it is always intuitively accessible and, indeed, accessible by itself (i.e. irreducible).<sup>9</sup> Philosophy does not create nature, but only thinks it, which is what we do or already have done when we think of nature as neither immediately transparent to thought nor ultimately closed to it. Studying nature always means having to deal with an immediate 'standstill' of thinking, with an alienation of reason, which then again is illuminated by the light of reason and can be comprehended in that light (and here lies the crux of all natural science confined to the understanding, it insists on regarding nature as the other of thought and still tries to think it). The externalisation of the idea has its immediately concealed principle in the idea; the step from self-determination to determination by something other is an option for self-determination; conversely a step out of determination by another into self-determination is not possible unless autonomy is given in advance, i.e. prior to that determination by another. This is why nature is not the first and not the last thing that philosophy has to deal with, but must be worked through on reason's path to becoming concrete as it flexibly forms itself.

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9 Intuitiveness is thus not a subjective feature or one rooted in epistemology, but an absolute characteristic of nature.

## 2 Natural Nature

These reflections on the systematic relation between the first and the second parts of the system give us some clues to the answers to the second of our questions in this section, namely that as to the more precise form of the determinacy of nature. The most important moments of general natural determination can be summarised once again as follows. First is the immediate overcoming of the logical band, its fundamental character of dissipation, of the dispersion of the conceptual in nature, which we encountered in Hegel's observations on the overcoming of logical order in this sphere, especially concerning the logical "impotence of nature". In the multiplicity of varieties of plants and animals, for instance, nature is underivably multivalent, there is no principle and no ground for the specific number of types of orchid that actually exist, for it could just as well be ten more or fifteen less. Hegel regards such things as an indication of the "concept's being-outside-itself" in nature, as an indicator that the latter's manifold diversity is an unlimited differentiation.

Secondly, every naturally existing being is irreducibly sensuous, which means it is present in persistent immediacy. This feature has to do with the relative freedom of nature manifested in sensuous consciousness in that natural objects are effectively 'actually particular' existing beings. But then the materialism of this sensuous consciousness does not see that there are ideal relations, connections and proportions, which are firmer or possess more actuality than the immediate natural objects themselves. When one animal kills another, this shows that the negative relation of self-preservation is 'more actual' than mere material existence; the orbits of the planets are in a certain sense 'more actual' than the planets themselves, for without its orbit the particular heavenly body would lose its specific existence as planet altogether. Even more significant is the fact that with language man possesses a 'means' against which the immediacy of nature cannot defend itself and to which it has to submit—just as the earth is not the same any more since speaking beings live on it. Not only has the face of the earth changed and changes constantly, but as the home of beings endowed with reason and with that also as a location of freedom, the earth is in a very fundamental way something qualitatively different from being simply one among countless heavenly bodies. Still, this does not alter the fact that the earth as a natural object will always display an observable face, that it is never wholly thought, never merely a more or less complex formula, whether astronomical, cosmological or ecological.

The aspects described here bring out one of the differences between physics and philosophy of nature. Physics, at least that of the Galilean variety, has no interest at all in the ontological status of natural objects as such, for instance

what it means to say that *natural objects* are qualitatively determined as being *observable*, extended beings (*res extensae*), or that they are always *in motion*. Physics is concerned with transforming natural things into objects determined by quantitative laws and as such calculable in every respect and then technically accessible and if possible manipulable. One can say that physics intentionally looks past the immediate naturalness of the natural thing, idealising it methodically oriented to an identity from which it, nature, precisely in its naturalness, blocks itself off. The philosophy of nature on the other hand tries initially to think of what accounts for the fact that something is qualitatively a natural thing and not a logical thought or a self with spirit and mind; it takes the natural object as an underivably distinct being, in which a kind of interiority, a self can emerge which is not something that can be inserted into a formula. All physics tends to be an attempt at reducing nature to logic, that is regarding the appearance of natural things *as if* they were purely logical objects and together in their totality formed a world of objectivity, of the immediate reality of the concept. In Hegel's view the philosophy of nature certainly is open to logical determination, which physics develops; "the *emergence* and *formation* of the philosophical science [i.e. of nature]" in a certain sense, he believes, has "empirical physics" as "a prerequisite and condition".<sup>10</sup> But the philosophy of nature takes these determinations in terms of the wholly differently dimensioned investigation of nature regarded as the externalised, dispersed and indeed fragmented idea; it seeks nature as that which has lost itself, while maintaining that self beyond the loss. The pathways physicists drive through nature are for the philosophy of nature not simply the neat highways of the exposure of nature, but rather traces in the labyrinth of the externalised idea, logical crystallisation points within an alogical space which really only indirectly lead to the entry and exit points of the whole. Much is gained for the understanding of Hegel's philosophy of nature once we realise that central to it is the cultivation of an eye for nature that does not see it as already modified and integrated into Francis Bacon's *regnum hominis* (the dominion of man on earth), but rather as retaining its original unfamiliarity, its foreignness, an eye that lets it be. A decidedly distinct kind of transparency of the natural for us from that which functions in the models of physics does exist; a transparency of the heavens, of the ocean, of motion and of the voices of the animals, all of which maintain a shading and an opacity and yet 'speak' to us in a way that is not arbitrary. If physics can be a conversation of man with himself about his goals occasioned by external nature, then the philosophy of nature is at least

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10 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 246 Remark.

the attempt to offer the hermeneutic of a beginning quite distinct from that.<sup>11</sup> Hegel could even regard the philosophy of nature quite explicitly as the “liberation of nature” including as it does also “the liberation” of the spirit “within it”.<sup>12</sup>

In § 247 of the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel defines the general concept of nature as follows.

Nature has shown itself to be the idea in the form of its *otherness*. Since the *idea* is here the negative of itself or *external to itself*, nature is not external only relative to this idea . . . , rather, externality constitutes the determination in which the idea is nature.

Nature is not only that which from our point of view is external (non-I); it is in an *absolute* sense external, which includes the fact that it is external even when it encounters itself and is thus determined according to a law of externality or of external relation. In nature it is not simply that all things exist in spatial and temporal separation, thus also, as Hegel immediately continues, always in “*isolation* with respect to each other”, which is what sets them in relations of “*necessity* and of *contingency*”<sup>13</sup> to each other. In nature in fact everything exists as *external to itself*, as something that for instance has the conditions of its existence outside itself and indeed seeks them outside itself, as something that stands to others in external, i.e. in sensuous relation. The organs of sense are many, but also what they transmit is variously determined and, something Kant was also aware of, it does not reach the unity of thought by itself. Finally, in confrontation with itself the natural thing is external in that it is *finite*, which means that it is not grounded in itself but in another. In the logic of being finitude happens when *is* and *ought*, external features and inner character fall apart. All natural objects are thus in terms of their immediate existence broken existences, never pure self-relations, but always characterised by an *eccentricity*, to which they ultimately succumb. Nature is, as Hegel says, the “*unresolved contradiction*”,<sup>14</sup> a conclusion that corresponds to the immediate groundlessness (the lack of totality) of the natural. Nature is what is immediately and inherently (not only for us) *different* and the way

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11 Cf. Th. S. Hoffmann, *Philosophische Physiologie. Untersuchungen zur Systematik des Begriffs der Natur in der Geschichte der Philosophie*—Philosophical physiology, a systematic study of the concept of nature throughout the history of philosophy, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2003 (on Hegel: pp. 396–477).

12 Hegel *ibid.* § 246 Addition.

13 Hegel *ibid.* § 248.

14 Hegel *ibid.* § 248, Remark.

forward for the philosophy of nature lies in the investigation of the differentiation of this *different* being, i.e. in the successive divestiture of externality by means of which nature brings its own ground—the idea—to shine through from out of itself and ultimately to find itself as spirit.

### 3 System of Nature

Our third and final question concerns the systematic character of the philosophy of nature and refers to the path the self-alienated concept takes through the determinations of nature. Can it be that there is an inner articulation of the structure of meaning that has been rent asunder? Hegel thinks the answer to this paradoxical question is: yes, there can. His philosophy of nature breaks down into three departments through which a path is traversed from the first and most abstract to the most concrete, that is most interwoven and interlinked form of natural existence. In natural determinations we always encounter an unresolved antagonism between the relation *to others* and the relation *to itself*. Natural relations become ever more structurally dense in the development from the purely external mode of existence in space through the relative self-relation of physical bodies existing 'in' space and time all the way to death, to the self-alienation of the living being. The relation to others and that to itself promote and produce each other, although they never get to cover each other completely. Structurally there emerges in each case a concept of the natural form characterised by a persistent 'bipolarity' that can be schematically represented by an ellipse with its two focii. *Location* and *motion* are the natural terms that are the first concrete ones, because they contain the mediation of space and time and not only can they not be represented independently of each other, in fact both presuppose the pair of polar concepts space and time, which themselves only apparently have meanings independent of each other. *Space*, the most general notion of natural separation, is the concept of presence losing itself, of abstractly unlimited multiplicity. Difference is inherent to space as such, at first as the simple difference of multiplicity; in most general terms difference in space is negated space, that is the (extensionless) *point*, which also serves us well when we make an image for ourselves of the multiplicity of spatial separation—we think of space as many points, as composed of, as it were, positively negated space. In fact, the point both negates space *and* restores it. It is negated space *and* is simultaneously itself an 'element' of space or indeed 'spatial' in its own right; we can even say that given this immediate differentiation, the point is external to itself, it is the one and the other point, it is as such many points or it is the *line*. In the line the point has

thus spatially negated space, that is it has negated space *and* not negated it, but then it has also negated itself and its own negation. This negation of the negation, however, according to the law of natural alienation does not affirm the point anew, but rather overcomes the first negation, the line itself, setting one line against the other, which means generating the *plane*. The plane is on the one hand the negation of line and point and on the other, as negation of the negation, the restoration of space itself now appearing not as abstract space as such, but space enclosed in a surface, determinate space. Determinate space is *dimensioned* space; it is the space that for the first time can be a *place*, a *location*, the space filled by *matter*, which is occupied by a physical body, finally also the space that can be living space for a living being. One can in fact take a cross-section of Hegel's philosophy of nature along the space concept, which extends from the first, apparently still purely geometrical space concepts, through the concretely specified space in the laws of motion or the spatial structuring in crystallisation and heat transmission processes, right through to the life space of the earth as a total ecosystem, literally of the individual life form as a spatial existence moving freely in space composing a whole panorama of forms of space 'becoming itself'.

Hegel is quick to add that the motion of negation, which as specifically spatial moves on from the point into ever new forms—into the other point, into the other line—*also* has an aspect of relation to itself or of being-for-itself. The point that negates space or generates dimensions for it in the motion of negation is *also* (as one could say, in its 'second dimension') the *determinate* other of space and of spatial differentiation *as such*, it is the *point in time*; the line on which it relates itself to itself is one that is not only again spatial, but also the chronological extension of this being-for-itself as the negation of space. We can imagine this situation most easily by saying that in truth it is not really space that dimensions itself by itself, but that it *is* dimensioned by its determinate negation, time: time measures space—and conversely. Space is in ideal terms only spatially dimensioned; but then real spaces, that is specific 'cut-out' concrete spaces all the way through to the life spaces of the organisms only exist as functions of *motion*, only in the concrete unity of space and time that is motion. Conversely time is also as real time only dimensioned in motion, i.e. in relation to space. Time as such has neither beginning nor end, it is nothing more than the self-repulsion of the one *now*-point into the other, simply the difference in the *now*, which is a point and is not a point, which is *there* and is *not there*, which is immediately already at the other point. Here of course we are speaking solely of an empty time, which only says that there is always something other as such, that there is no real continuity, but only active discretion. The 'dimensions' of time—past, present and future—in contrast have

real motion, i.e. a unity of the spatial and the chronological, as their precondition. Only motion can have a beginning and an end; only moved masses have, as one could say, a 'history'. Thus we speak of a 'space of time' to designate real pasts, presents and futures and we think of such a space of time as a discrete continuum or as continuities of discrete terms, we think of them as a unity of space and time or as a moving whole. We think of a motion that fixes a concrete space and we think of a space that is not a static existence at all, but is filled with motion. If we think both together, the concrete, not merely abstract space, thus the *location*, and the concrete *motion* as one or in immediate identity, then for Hegel we already have *matter* in mind, which is nothing other than the location that cuts itself out, the determinate being 'in' space and time or the fulfilled relation of these two.

Matter is the first *subjective* form in nature, the first concrete relation of itself to itself, thus corresponding to the category *something* in the logic of being. Like something, matter is *finite*, which in particular means that it comes apart into a relation to itself and a relation to another. Kant regarded matter as the immediate result of repulsion and attraction,<sup>15</sup> and it physically shows in its *weight* its relative *totality*, its relative *selfness*, as all varieties of materialism emphasise. The selfness of matter is expressed for instance in the fact that in free fall, heavy matter cannot simply be determined by space and time any more as it adopts the law of (accelerated) motion, so that, as one might say, it reflects and refracts space and time through itself, thus making its determination dependent upon *itself*. The self-determining autonomy of the *presence* of the natural object, emerging here for the first time, becomes even stronger in the second section of Hegel's philosophy of nature, in the *Physics*, whose object for Hegel is always the naturally individuated body. He studies it in the development from the "free physical body", the first of which is light, through the particular bodies as qualified by, for instance, specific properties of cohesion or of sound, up to the chemical process, in which specific embodiment establishes a definite relation through its own specificity to other determinate embodiments. The lead concept of this middle section of the philosophy of nature is that of *individuality*, of natural particularity, here a particularity that essentially reveals itself. Hegel's philosophy of nature brings out in the natural bodies in general—and this is one of its most remarkable characteristics—distinct levels and grades of self-presentation, of self-revelation. Natural things come to rest in their development as soon as they reach physical individuality and are, for instance, masses as in finite mechanics and then, no longer

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15 Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*—Metaphysical starting grounds for natural science, AA IV, 498 f.

simply *in themselves*, they turn outwards and begin in their finite way, as it were, to ‘speak’. Hegel describes this as a “manifestation of the objects to each other”,<sup>16</sup> an aspect that once again no physics of the Galilean type would be interested in but which cannot be ignored in the philosophy of natural nature. In *light* the physical world reveals itself for the first time *as a world*, even if it is a still abstract whole of bodies shining for each other and mutually illuminating each other, now simultaneously individuating each other in their colours. The earth turns out to be an “elemental process”, a system of elements interacting with each other and, as a whole sphere closed within itself, an inherently individuated life space; the individual materials present themselves in specific weights and types of cohesion or in their specific characteristic tones, in which they give themselves an ideal presence in time. Indeed, they generate themselves as determinate forms and processes thereby reaching a concrete space of their own, a time of their own and also types of process all their own, which find their natural culmination in the third section of the philosophy of nature, in the section on *Organism*. It is interesting to note here that this ‘cosmic’ unfolding of the determinate natures in their individuality will become the general medium of the activity of art. Metals and woods combined into the instruments of an orchestra let a world of spirit and mind resound through them; it is the material qualities of earths, marbles and granites through which the work of the plastic arts individuates itself; and the voice giving colour to the ‘text’ in the here and now makes of the artwork of language more than just a work of reflection. In all art the mimetic reaches deeper than the range of possible intentions of the artist; liberated nature finds in mimesis a relation to the spirit explicitly setting itself free in art.

The maximal possible existence the idea reaches in nature is *life*; automotion and self-preservation of life designate the most external subjectivity that can possibly exist in the realm of natural dispersion. Life encompasses all the terms of nature within itself beginning with space and time in automotion—thus can Hegel call organism a “free time”<sup>17</sup>—through the terms of materiality and self-formation of the individual body all the way to the geological nature of the earth, which can be regarded as the universal body of life and in this sense forms the specific real space of life. Life “takes possession” of nature in its totality. In the biochemical process of the plants life assimilates the inorganic,

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16 Hegel *ibid.* § 278.

17 Hegel *ibid.* § 351. The animal structures time itself and is not simply subject to it; its voice is in a certain sense the triumph over the merely external passage of time—it is freely formed time, a qualified *now* as “determined” from the “inside”.

working with light and cohesion so that if anywhere at all then here nature as nature relates itself *to itself*. In life the natural relations are determined as also *internal* relations of life, even if it remains true that natural life is divided into a multiplicity of mutually external individuals which either have nothing to do with each other or make each other into external preconditions for their own self-preservation. The single individual is as such *not* adequate to the idea of life or, more generally still, to the idea as such; its natural particularity lies in the inadequacy of the idea within it to the externality of its natural existence. In this respect the natural individual is, as Hegel says, “originally sick”, and the “germ of its death” is “in-born”, its particular life is always also the development of this germ and the “fulfillment of this destiny”.<sup>18</sup> It is in the death of the natural thing that the contradiction, as which it immediately exists, is overcome. Only living things can die; stones, metals and whole galaxies can at most dissolve or transit into new material and spatiotemporal formations. The death of the organism, in contrast, is a relation to itself in which life as it were *externalises its externality* or in which, as Hegel says, “the last externality of nature”, its last and most extreme non-relation is “overcome”.<sup>19</sup> In the death of the organism finitude destroys itself, externality externalises itself, which in fact only means that the true infinity or the being-for-itself, the autonomy of the idea or of the self flashes through in death. In the conclusion to the philosophy of nature Hegel makes the following statement.

Nature has thus transited into its truth, into the subjectivity of the concept, whose *objectivity* is itself the individuality whose immediacy is overcome, the *concrete universal*, so that the concept is set which has the reality corresponding to it, the concept, for its *determinate being—spirit*.<sup>20</sup>

This clearly does not mean that spirit evolves from nature *in the sense of a natural process*, just as little as the *Logic* concludes with the suggestion that nature results from the idea with natural causality. The statement says firstly, that the nature overcoming itself in the death of the natural creature points to its ground, to the idea or the *mediation of the totality*, which in nature as such could never be represented, but which in hidden form is always relied upon. It means further that it is now clear that the idea cannot find its adequate

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18 Hegel *ibid.* § 375.

19 Hegel *ibid.* § 376.

20 Hegel *Ibid.*

representation in the “immediacy of individuality”, not in the externality and dispersion of nature, but only when this immediacy and this separation have been overcome. The idea finds its “objectivity” only in the idea that nature as such left behind. The relation of the idea to the idea that returns back into itself from out of nature *overcome* is for Hegel the spirit, whose immediate self-consciousness is to be not nature (which would make it external to itself), but to be, even within what is external, by itself. Socrates says in Plato's *Phaedo* that for the philosopher death is not an especially spectacular event, because he has always led a genuinely spiritual existence so that what is merely immediately natural does not really concern him too much. The philosopher has always lived in the concept that recoiled from nature back to itself, that is pure identity with itself and as such is no longer affected by any kind of death. At this point Hegel does not attach any analogous warnings or advice, but for him too it holds that spiritual existence, the ground of all human existence, *per definitionem* does not succumb to the natural process nor can it do so. What is spiritual and intellectual, personal and subjective, cannot be grasped from the standpoint of nature. Only the nature that overcomes itself in the death of the natural creature, disappearing into self-relation, leads us to the threshold of the spirit.

### Literature

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# Philosophy of Subjective Spirit

## 1 Manifestation, Subjective

From Hegel we have the statement that “it is precisely in knowing that he is an animal that man ceases to be one”.<sup>1</sup> This statement is an indication of what it means to say that self-realising cognition is a process of shedding immediacy, of reduction to a moment (here: of nature) and of distancing itself from nature. Man is existing actual spirit, which is why he does not even have the choice of whether he wants to identify himself with his natural immediacy or not; he cannot do it because as spirit and mind he has already determined himself to be beyond nature. This means, for instance, that his character as a spiritually self-determining being and not simply a natural object determined by others lies in his very essence. The first part of Hegel’s philosophy of spirit, the theory of subjective spirit deals with this *condicio humana*, that is the condition of being embedded in natural immediacy but destined to freedom and knowledge. As everywhere else, here too the character of spirit is not simply to reject nature, but to regard it as a moment of its own being, namely as a setting overcome, and even to regard it, in a certain sense, as the midpoint of spiritual life. For the spirit, nature attains a transparency it does not have for itself. An example Hegel often refers to because of its central importance here is *language*. In its immediate substrate language consists of sounds, verbal articulations, physical events, but, just as importantly, this is not a physical event such as, say, a sneeze, a cough, the sound of a metal or the call of an animal, but a medium of mental, indeed spiritual and with that also intelligible presence. In language too the idea *releases* itself freely into nature; it releases itself into nature not *as* nature, but into nature overcome, which, while it certainly is external and qualified by the laws of externality, remains essentially the objectivity of the concept that remains by itself. The example of language here makes clear just how far we have come since the *Logic*. Logic as such knows of no mediation via a non-logical medium, yet that is precisely what the spirit is, namely the capacity to be such a medium that enables it to be there for other embodiments of spirit. Logic thus has no immediate knowledge of the self-opening of a real subjectivity for another real subjectivity; logic

1 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, TW 13, 112; cf. T.M. Knox: *Hegel’s Aesthetics*, Oxford 1975, v. 1, p. 80.

has no knowledge of individuated subjectivity reflecting into itself a natural difference, even if that difference is always overcome. As we know, logic certainly does have the concept of the I, and it knows also what one can call the unclouded concept of the person; but we have to venture into the philosophy of spirit to encounter the problem of personality maintaining itself against nature. Personality in its complete concept is never exhausted by logic, not even by the logic of a subjective self-relation. All personality possesses real competence to define itself logically by means of the non-logical, that is via nature.

Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit is divided into three spheres. *Anthropology* is the study of simple, finite spirit in itself; *phenomenology*, as the theory of consciousness is called here (not agreeing in every respect with the programme of the Jena *Phenomenology*), studies the finite spirit that has become consciousness of itself; and finally, *psychology* is the name Hegel gives to the study of what we can call the spirit actually grasping the *condicio humana* in all its facets. With this systematic differentiation, *subjective spirit* for Hegel is not simply Descartes' *res cogitans* nor Kant's transcendental apperception, but extends beyond both of them into a supra-individual context, an external world. We have been familiar with this notion since the *Phenomenology of Spirit* at least, from which we also know that the supra-individual, *objective* spirit is essentially present in historical worlds and forms. In the *Encyclopaedia* under the title "objective spirit" Hegel deals with the philosophy of right before following its implications to the great stage of history. The third section of the theory of spirit is then dedicated to the philosophy of *absolute spirit*, of the genuinely autonomous spirit resting wholly within itself, which in no way refers beyond itself any longer and which takes the forms of art, religion and philosophy, all closely related to each other in terms of their content. On this final level the claims of subjectivity are met again after having been suspended in the realm of objective spirit as the moments of alienation contained in law and history are erased, all of which we shall look at in detail below.

According to the *Encyclopaedia* the general terms of spirit common to all three spheres of the philosophy of spirit can be characterised by four main aspects.

1. "For us spirit has nature as its *precondition*, whose *truth* and with that *absolute first principle* spirit is. In this truth nature has vanished and spirit turns out to be the idea that has attained its being-for-itself, the idea whose *object* as well as *subject* is *the concept*" (§ 381).<sup>2</sup> This moment is what makes spirit

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2 Quotations from the *Encyclopaedia* in this section will be referenced by paragraph numbers in the text.

“absolute negativity” (ibid.), that pure, active self-relation, which as *absolute form* is already subjectivity, only now it is, as already mentioned, subjectivity explicitly in relation to the naturalness of nature *overcome* in it and as the return to itself from out of nature. “Absolute negativity” means that in its own terms spirit overcomes nature as its negation, its own overcoming, affirming itself as itself against nature; it means that spirit is the presence and vitality of the absolute self defending its integrity against loss and alteration. Decisive to an understanding of Hegel’s concept of spirit is that it is not in any sense “thing-like”; rather Hegel thinks of it as pure autonomous activity, as a performance concept. If we recall from the *Logic* that a relation is always “older” than its relata, that totality precedes its moments, then we can see in what sense spirit can on the one hand have nature for its precondition while on the other hand being its “first principle” and “truth”; it is the sense in which real language requires its physical sound system as a precondition for its realisation while still being, in terms of its concept, the first principle and the truth of the phoneme or lexeme as an external sign.<sup>3</sup>

2. By virtue of absolute negativity spirit is next determined as *freedom* and is itself existing freedom (cf. § 382). Being free and being spirit are in truth the same and only what is immediately fixed externally as such is unfree. Spirit, however, as Hegel writes, overcomes “the negation that is its individual immediacy, the infinite *pain*”, because it knows that every limitation immediately imposed upon it is in itself already overcome, for it is not a substantial objection to its own selfhood.

3. In the universality of absolute negativity or as the autonomous identity of self-relation, spirit is *clarity*, pure revelation: “The determinacy of spirit is... *manifestation*. It is not just any old determination or content, whose expression or externality would simply be the form distinct from it not itself revealing *anything*, but its determination and content is this revelation itself” (§ 383). The actuality of spirit is a clarity, a pure self-communication, transparency or self-evidence as such, which in principle does not remain closed in itself like nature, but is always there as presence of mind, presence of spirit. People are “present” for us in a very different way to that of animals, and we study works of art in a very different way than we do natural objects. All spirit is communicative, it is a self-showing, not a self-immersion in its own immediacy. Man has this system of spirit we call language not in order to hide and

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3 The limit of this analogy lies initially in the fact that the language of the *finite* spirit is not immediately “the original word”, as which Hegel can explicitly designate “the automotion of the absolute idea” (GW XII, 237; Miller 825). Only for the conversation of absolute spirit with itself, God’s creative word, does it hold without limitations.

distort things, but in order to express and represent himself to others. Openness is the essence of spirit, which is so often overlooked because it is as if it disguises itself in its obviousness, but the self making itself understood here is the self of spirit.

4. Lastly, spirit is not only open and clear to itself, but also clarifying and opening itself to others. It is spirit that asserts nature as being “its world”; “revelation in the concept is the creation of its world as its being, in which spirit gives itself the *affirmation* and *truth* of its freedom” (§ 384). Truly spirited concepts of things are never merely depictions in the mirror of consciousness; they are actual and effective, living and active concepts. To be a *being of spirit* does not mean harmlessly having soft consciousness images of so-called hard facts. It means existing as that absolutely real “fact-act”, of that performative I, of which Fichte said that it comprehends within it basically “all, i.e. an infinite, unlimited reality”.<sup>4</sup> Hegel’s (like all) “conceptual realism” is the obligation of thought to commit itself to the opposite of armchair contemplation.

To know what these four characteristics of spirit in detail contain and what they imply is indeed for Hegel “the most concrete and for that the highest and most difficult” knowledge that thought can strive for (§ 377). Most difficult for us is to think through what is supposedly self-evident; as always, self-knowledge is the most difficult kind of knowledge. In the “philosophical view” of spirit it appears then “as forming and educating itself in its concepts” and “its expressions [appear] as the moments of its production of itself to itself, of its closure in conclusion with itself, which is what makes it actual spirit” (§ 387 Remark). Spirit has no teacher apart from itself; it follows no external necessity imposed upon it from outside. If one can say with Hegel that the absolute idea is the really creative and concrete “word” and one can also say that determinate nature is a creation of the idea, of that original “meaning” in its being-outside-itself, then one must also say of spirit that it is creator and self-creator—in varying degrees, of course, according to whether, as in subjective and objective spirit, it is a question of “finite spirit” or if, as with the absolute spirit, i.e. the “unity . . . existing in and for itself . . . of the objectivity of spirit and its ideality or of its concept”, spirit is set “in its absolute truth” (§ 385).

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4 Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* § 5, GA I/2, p. 392. Cf. the English translation in *Fichte: Science of Knowledge*, translated by P. Heath and J. Lachs, New York 1970, p. 225.

## 2 Anthropology and Theory of Consciousness

The result of the last section is that the theory of subjective spirit treats of finite spirit still enmeshed in the immediacy it also immediately overcomes. Moving on from that the first form of the actuality of spirit is the *soul*, which Hegel also calls the “spirit *asleep*” (§ 389) and with it he opens his *Anthropology*. The soul is well dubbed the “spirit *asleep*” for it is clearly not simply nature, but a feeling and sensitive being and is only indirectly or unconsciously self determining, a being that has hardly woken up to freedom. Initially at least still in its form a natural existence of spirit, it is the soul that gives subjective spirit an immediate connection to nature. The soul-spirit reacts to climatic or seasonal changes in the environment, while of course maintaining its own integrity in the face of them. It is not primarily caught up in a process of finding its determination, rather, it is a kind of being that actively determines; it is already as soul “subject”, not merely the predicate of an “externality” (cf. § 411). This spirit is as yet a *given* subject and only on the next level will it as subject *reflect* (phenomenology) and finally also *comprehend* (psychology). It is as a *given* spirit then that it works its own way into the material. An *actual soul* now, this integral spirit is the energetic or active unity of inner and outer, of soul and body, in which the *body* here is distinguished from a merely physical body whose materiality as such has, as Hegel says, “*in itself* . . . no truth” (§ 412). The *body* here is not to be understood merely in terms of mechanical, chemical or biochemical laws; in fact it must be seen as the soul’s expression, the way it *expresses* itself as it works its way into physical material as its medium. The body can indeed be grasped fundamentally as a “sign” or “work of art” of the soul (cf. § 411), as a sign transparent to the human spirit in terms of its inner, conscious meaning. Kant said that the “ideal of beauty” lies in the form of the human being as the only existing self-goal in the world.<sup>5</sup> Hegel too points out that the human form completes animal form and that it exhibits forms of “such light, indeterminate and inexpressible modification” (§ 411 Remark) in which we immediately register the presence of mind and spirit. The human hand, for instance, is not just an ingenious “mechanism” of organic nature; it is the soul rendered observable, a present pathos and just as much knowable will; a tool then not just of life but of the spirit and as such it is as important to the speech-maker as to the artist. Hegel adds that on the purely anthropological level spirit is only “the *first* appearance . . . and *language* is then its complete expression” (ibid.). In man language and consciousness awaken together; only the conscious being speaks and only a speaking being is conscious of itself.

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5 Cf. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*—Critique of the Power of Judgment, § 17, AA V, 233.

The second level of the theory of subjective spirit deals with *consciousness* as the form that has only just awoken to the fact that it is spirit. This can be read as a short version of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, running only from consciousness through self-consciousness to reason—we will not review here in detail this as now integrated into the system it was formerly only supposed to introduce. It does however become clear that being conscious as a specific mode of human existence represents a thoroughly eccentric position within the cosmos of spiritual being, as indeed all philosophy of consciousness (from Descartes through Kant to Sartre) always contains an abbreviation of the wealth of determinations of the spirit existing *in persona*; the critics of this philosophy of consciousness (from Leibniz through Hamann and Hegel all the way up to the ‘philosophy of life’) have always emphasised this point. Consciousness as a form, especially as a form of the immediate opposition, of difference and distance to the “object”, contains an abstraction, a formality and “bad” subjectivity which does not yet know itself to be true, or indeed, as we can say, fulfilled by the world. Restoring totality to its valid rights against the divisions of consciousness is not irrationalism; on the contrary, it means taking the claim of reason seriously, as Hegel showed in his critique of the philosophy of reflection back in Jena.

### 3 Psychology

On the third level, in which subjective spirit comes into its own, spirit is the unity of soul and consciousness and reflects on itself as a worldly existence, bound together with its world as a substantially *saturated* spirit. Here psychology is the theory of the self-relation of this concrete subjective spirit as well as of its relations to others as they are given in intuition and in imagining but also in willing. After he destroyed metaphysical psychology, Kant rejected the notion that there could be an “empirical” science with this name, objecting that the phenomena involved cannot be quantified and treated mathematically and, moreover, the so-called “object” of such a science, namely the “subject”, is precisely *not* an object and is *altered* already by observation.<sup>6</sup> With Hegel’s fundamentally reflexive concept of knowing this problem does not arise; if in principle *all* knowledge is self-knowledge, the self-knowing of the self, then the self-knowledge of spirit is not excluded from the rank of science—a science which it has to be said again stands in the tradition of the psychology of

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6 Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*—Metaphysical first grounds of natural science, preface, AA IV, p. 471.

Plato and especially of Aristotle and which as such is thus not a prelude to any kind of 'natural scientific' psychology. The general theories of theoretical and of practical spirit fall in the domain of this psychology, which culminates in the theory of the "free spirit", the finite spirit that has attained what could be called its 'normal measure' in that it knows what it wants and its wishes do not go beyond the matter. In this field it was realised first in the twentieth century that Hegel is one of the most important philosophers of language in the entire tradition. The topic is prominent in his work since the Jena system drafts, in which we first encountered the close link Hegel makes between language and consciousness. Language is one of the fundamental behaviours of the living being consciously striving to grasp its spiritual being. It belongs initially to theoretical spirit, forming the link between intuition and representation on the one hand and thought on the other. Moreover, it is also a function of that imposing power of imagination with which spirit does not so much 'imagine something' as rather impress itself upon or works its way into its physical world. Hegel speaks of "sign-making fantasy" (cf. § 457). Imagination here could be said to turn from a "subjective" into an "objective" imagination and back again; or representation is given simultaneously in the senses of inner intuition and external presentation. With language, spirit gives itself an extended embodiment and is in this new body completely new and just for itself with its own articulated pictures or images of its interior, an interior which now for the first time is really "its own". It is in language that subjective spirit becomes *objective* to itself *and* to others, that it has and knows a developed and fulfilled world which is a world in common with others. Language is thus in a certain sense a precondition for thought as well as for willing—only in a *certain* sense, it has to be emphasised, since language itself has its concept and ground in *intelligence* and its goal in real knowledge and activity.

But spirit does not only set itself in relation to a world imagined by it as somehow already full, it finds its specific truth as *subjective* spirit by actively filling its world, by confronting it as practical spirit. *Practical* spirit presupposing knowledge, being itself "the determining factor of the content" (§ 468), is the subjective spirit we call *will*. This does not mean that it is arbitrary. Even if it starts from a "practical feeling" and even if "inclinations and passions" are not foreign to it, spirit is essentially not a natural individual, not a contingent, but a thinking will and can only make a claim to "happiness" in this sense (cf. § 480). Kant's opposition between eudaemonism and autonomy means nothing in Hegel's system. As a genuinely free spirit, that is as a unity of theoretical and practical spirit, man is nothing other than conscious thinking realising itself. Spirit is now, according to § 481, "the *immediate individuality* arrived at by itself", thus, as one could say, the concrete I realised as both soul and spirit,

but which—as the continuation has it—“is also purified into the *universal* determination, to freedom itself”. The free spirit is the conscious willing of freedom, that is willing an actuality determined by spirit or reason as the world in which the subjective spirit can find itself. This world or sphere, which has as its precondition the spirit that wills itself and its objective freedom at least *in itself*, but also *for itself* in the sense of the teleology of history as a “progress in the consciousness of freedom”, is the sphere of objective spirit.

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## Philosophy of Right and of History

The canonical text on Hegel's philosophy of right is not the *Encyclopaedia*, but the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, a major work itself, even if it was published in Berlin in 1821 only “for use in conjunction with the lectures”. It is extraordinary to realise that for Hegel this work, usually referred to simply as the *Philosophy of Right*, represents his practical philosophy as a whole—he never produced a separate ethics or ‘moral doctrine’. But even the early works, the *Natural law* essay or the *System of Ethical Life*, written in the years 1802 and 1803, showed Hegel as champion of an integral view of the practical as primarily determined by that central moment of objective spirit known as right or law. Thus one of the main sections of the *Philosophy of Right* bears the title “Morality”, which here finds itself wedged in between the theory of abstract right and the theory of ethical life, which latter runs from the family through society to the state. Clearly then for Hegel, compared to Kant and Fichte for instance, the accents are externally at least quite different. He does not have much time for the (subjective) moral pathos of those two and appears rather, giving *precedence* to law, to stress that he considers the range of subjective practical reason, that is of morality, to be far less than his predecessors did. As two pithy and popular formulations have it, Hegel rediscovered the institutions and he methodically brought out the historical dimension of human practice. Either way, law is clearly more suitable than morality for such purposes. With no less pith it has often been emphasised that Hegel resorts to an almost Aristotelian model of substantial ethical life while giving very different weight to the state than his predecessors; the implication being, of course, that he gives it too much weight. The latter view is adopted most especially by those critics of Hegel who see the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole as an attempt by our philosopher to serve the Prussian state and even to recommend himself for the role that by his admirers and detractors has so often been assigned to him, namely that of *Prussian state philosopher*. Taken in isolation and apart from the lectures themselves, with the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel was supposedly trying to accommodate himself to the political situation following the repressive Karlsbad decrees of 1819. In fact, such claims are found among the very first responses to the publication itself and were forcefully revived most recently in the 1970s—the consequence being an ultimately thoroughly unproductive moralisation of the whole

discussion.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that Hegel irritated old friends with his *Elements* and, as he himself reports in a letter, was suddenly confronted by many “sour, or at least silent faces”; he explained this to himself as being due to the fact that the heads behind these faces were “perplexed” as “into which categories they should place the matter”.<sup>2</sup> Hegel once described himself as an “anxious person” who loved “peace and quiet”;<sup>3</sup> nevertheless the anecdote relating what happened while on a visit to Dresden in the summer of 1820 three weeks after completing the manuscript of the *Philosophy of Right* is instructive. He declined the Saxon elbwine he was offered and instead raised a glass of champagne to the 14th of July, but his companions did not know what the date meant nor what the storming of the Bastille was all about. Not to suggest that this has anything to do with not being well adapted to the spirit of the times, this incident shows that Hegel could cause embarrassment because by the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century his concepts diverged markedly from the by then increasingly chauvinistic atmosphere in Germany.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel conducts a struggle on several fronts at once. Hegel's brusque rejections were directed at the historical school of jurisprudence that was just taking off as much as at the restorative tendencies of the likes of Karl Ludwig von Hallers (1768–1832), no less at the extravagant political constructions of the Fichte school than at the liberalism of his day, which understood the state as only an external arrangement of necessity and not based on participation. The preface concludes with a discussion of the standpoint of a “higher” right of sentiment and feeling, one of whose defenders, the Berlin theologian Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849), immediately supported the “pure, pious youths” who incited the murder of Kotzebue, with warm words of appreciation for dealing with that poet living on Russian roubles with the dagger of the fatherland! Confronting all these views Hegel's fundamental position clearly relies on elaborating the nature of rational law. But then he does not see rational law as an abstract

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1 Recent research has corrected and/or contextualised many of the details and specific interpretations Karl-Heinz Ilting thought he could rely upon. See e.g. Lucas, Hans-Christian and Rameil, Udo, *Furcht vor der Zensur? Zur Entstehungs- und Druckgeschichte von Hegels Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*—Fear of censure? On the writing and publication of Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, in *Hegel-Studien* 15 (1980), 63–93.

2 Hegel to Daub, *Briefe* v. II, no. 387, p. 263. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 461.

3 Hegel to Niethammer, *Briefe* v. II, no. 390, p. 272. Cf. *Letters*, Butler and Seiler p. 470.

4 Anecdote of Friedrich Christoph Förster, in G. Nicolin, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*—Hegel in the accounts of his contemporaries, p. 214.

*ought* hovering over things that only promises freedom. For Hegel rational law makes it possible actually to experience freedom in real time. This means that *a priori* and empirical moments must not fall apart in the concept of law; both have to be conceived as one living unity within it. The famous line from the preface, “what is rational, that is actual; and what is actual, that is rational” (GW XIV/1, 14),<sup>5</sup> means in the context of the *Philosophy of Right* basically nothing other than that law is only then true law when it is not an abstract *ought*, an external standard imposed upon reality, but itself is actually arrived at as being, an actually existing *ought*. This statement has occasionally been taken as one of Hegel’s attempts at ingratiating himself as if it meant ‘whatever the Prussian government *de facto* does is *eo ipso* also rational’. But the statement contains no message of such bad empiricism, in fact it simply expresses in modified form what is for Hegel the only real foundation for philosophy as Parmenides formulated it so long ago, namely the identity of thinking and being. It was thus completely wrongheaded to attempt, apparently claiming support from Hegel’s lectures, to defuse the line so that it only says ‘what is rational *will become*—shortly, or when the cows come home, or three days after that—actual’, as if it amounted to nothing more than faith in enlightened progress or was intended to offer a little bit of hope. The result would be an image of Hegel as a split personality, one accommodating, the one who published the principle of the rationality of the real, and one unadapted, who in the lectures states that the rational *will become* actual, which by implication must mean that up to now that actual reality has not yet become rational. This is not simply untrue to Hegel, but in his view untrue to reason itself, for this interpretation suggests that reason is not actual at all. It would mean sacrificing the whole point of Hegel’s rationalism (and realism), in which reason is never merely pale form, but absolute form generating its own reality.<sup>6</sup> We can explain this with Hegel’s own words:

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5 Quotations from the *Philosophy of Right* in the following, if not from the GW edition, are from vol. 7 of the Suhrkamp edition. Paragraph numbers are given where possible and page numbers for the additions and marginalia.

6 Clearly then the suggestion for defusing the statement has no unambiguous philological support in Hegel. I refer to the notes of the lectures on the philosophy of law given by Hegel in the winter semester of 1819–20, published in 2000. “What is rational is actual and vice versa, but not in the particular or individual case, which can be confused.” Cf. Emil Angehrn, Martin Bondeli und Hoo Nam Seelmann eds., Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts, Berlin 1819/20. Nachgeschrieben von Johann Rudolf Ringier*—Lectures on the philosophy of right, Berlin 1819–20, lecture notes by Johann Rudolf Ringier, *Vorlesungen* vol. 14, Hamburg 2000, p. 8.

The true idea is substantial, the inner concept itself—no empty image, it is what is the strongest, that which alone exercises power. It would be an empty, irreligious image to see the divine as not powerful enough to provide itself with existence, as if the truth lies only beyond the blue sky or in subjective thoughts, in the interior. . . . By knowing the idea in philosophy we know the actual itself, what is, not what is not.<sup>7</sup>

The actual reality, the substance of the organism and with that its normal measure cannot be sickness, which in fact can only reveal itself with respect to the precondition of health; unfreedom is nothing for the stone, but only has meaning for the being endowed with freedom, i.e. under the precondition of the actuality of the opposite of unfreedom.

For Hegel, it is no business of the *Philosophy of Right* to give the state detailed advice in the way Plato could not resist “recommending to the nannies never to stand still with the children” (GW XIV/1, 15) or Fichte demanded that the police arrest drunks.<sup>8</sup> Its topic is objective spirit, the reason that already exists out there, which is the first thing that has to be known. This is always more difficult than trying to imagine to oneself how things should really be, quite simply because such images are always subjectively obvious even without any relation to reality. In law, however, what is required is objective self-evidence, the obviousness of the *idea* “that exercises power” to the extent that this—for law is the realm of objective spirit—is prior to subjective spirit too.

## 1 Abstract Right and Morality

What is law, what is right? The first paragraph of the *Philosophy of Right* answers this question with a classical formulation, which, given all that we have learned of Hegel's philosophy, we can now grasp in its total systematic dimension. “The *philosophical science of law* has the *idea of right*, the concept of law and its realisation, for its object”. The philosophical theory of law is concerned with the idea of right; this means that its topic is the original constitution of right as such, its “self-generation”, as one could say, its constitution *a priori*. The philosophy of right is thus not merely a secondary reflection on law as factually given and already taken as a precondition, no mere ‘metascience’

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre* § 20, GA 1/4, p. 65. The English translation is by Michael Baur in F. Nuehouser ed. *J.G. Fichte, Foundations of Natural Right*, Cambridge 2000, p. 233.

as an addition to the existing law books. Here it is about, as Hegel remarks in a comment in his own handwriting, the “nature of the matter” which is “itself” to be “considered”, “not” however as if “we have these and those concepts and contents, law, freedom, property, state etc., and [must] now also think through this concept” (GW XIV/2, 293). Philosophical study addresses the concept of right together with its realisation; which, of course, corresponds to Hegel’s conception of the real concept as an *energetic* unity of universal, particular and individual, as the power and law of self-realisation and not as the mere form of a content existing independent of it. Again the notorious statement we discussed above on the identity of the truly rational and the truly actual is to be understood in this “energetic” sense, the sense of the concept as self-realisation, for the concept “alone is what has *actuality*, which, indeed, it gives itself” (§ 1 Remark). Legal actuality is then not what is in principle irrational as if it stood somehow beside the rational concept of law. For instance, it is in no way the case, as claimed by legal positivism, that the formulation of legislation, as a matter of ‘legal policy’ in the sense of historically contingent decisions, stands *outside* the idea of right and would only be factually mediated with the latter. In this lies also the fundamental fact, so important to Hegel, that the world of law, however much it is an external, objective, historically actual world, is not closed off to the concept (and hence not to us either), not something abstract and alien; the ground of law *as* law is reason, not force or blind custom, not an interest like that of morality, religion, economics or even that of the maintenance of power relations. Even for the world of law the fundamental relation is one of “being able to be by oneself within the other”, being free within relations to what is other to oneself. For Hegel, law as such is the thinking of empirically existing freedom, the thought that not only *should* exist, but also is actually out there. The idea of law is, one could say, the syllogism binding the metaphysical *ought* of freedom with the immediate world. Law’s mission then is to give material form to freedom and for Hegel the true meaning of legal concepts and institutions is to be really existing freedom.

Thus law may not be seen in purely historical terms, as simply alien to the claim of reason and freedom; this is why Hegel turns against those “historical explanations” of the historical school of legal theory which was just rising to prominence when he arrived in Berlin.<sup>9</sup> He saw it as a kind of explanation that

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9 Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779–1861), the prominent jurist at the time who was close to the romantics, is generally regarded as the founder of the historical school of jurisprudence. Savigny taught at the Berlin university from 1810 and was Hegel’s colleague, but his claim that at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Germany there was no “calling or

literally keeps law at a theoretical distance; “the rational, the legal is [what is] present”, as is stated in a handwritten addition to § 3, it “must be rational in the present, not in circumstances which formerly prevailed” (GW XIV/2, 303). The historical approach to law, if it is really to be considered knowledge of law, in fact requires stepping outside the living and rational actuality of law and positivising it to an object of scholarly studies. Hegel sneers at the fact that anyone is considered a legal scholar if he can explain “why the prince-electors of the Pfalz” were “patrons of the tinkers”, while other citizens supposedly knew nothing of the law. “Such jurists,” Hegel writes, “regard the other people as their legal underlings” (GW XIV/2, 305). On the contrary, Hegel insists that in matters of the law there really are “no laymen”, indeed “no people” should let themselves “be deprived . . . of the right to rational comprehension” (ibid.). There is nothing ‘populist’ about this appeal to the public, for it flows directly from Hegel’s approach to understanding law as the living presence of conceptually understood freedom, access to which must in principle be open to every being endowed with reason and freedom. The world of law is a transparent one, because it is one of the mind and the spirit, not a natural world; it is opaque only to the extent that it contains elements and interests external to law, reducing law to their own medium. In the legally constituted world, as already Kant and Fichte taught, man lives no longer only in a natural world, but in a second world he has erected over and above the world of nature. In § 4 of the *Philosophy of Right* we read, “the foundation of law is *spirit* and within that more precisely its starting point is the *will* that is *free* so that freedom constitutes its [i.e. law’s] substance and determination and the system of law as the realm of realised freedom is a second nature that the world of spirit generates out of itself” (GW XIV/1, 31). This second world is, to be sure, an empirical world that is and remains external, but then one should perhaps add it is an empirical world which is inverted to freedom or re-interpreted in that direction. In this world the natural object is no longer simply only an external existence, but as *property* it has become a means to an existence defined by intentions and goals. In this world the other is not simply a natural individual nor just a (logical) subject, but a person, he is recognised as an existing free will and this

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profession” in the nation “for legislation” drew Hegel’s sharp critique. Cf. *Philosophy of Right* § 211, Remark. “To deny a cultivated nation or its legal profession the capability of writing a statue book—since the task is not to fashion a system of laws that are *new* in terms of their *content*, but to recognise the existing legal content in its determinate universality, i.e. to grasp it in *thought* . . . would be the greatest affront that could be offered to the nation or its legal profession” (GW XIV/1, 177).

recognition immediately sets limits to other free wills, while simultaneously, of course, grounding a mutual relationship between them.

Just as Fichte did in his *Foundations of Natural Right*, Hegel grounds law and the structure of legal reality initially in subjectivity, in the I, the formal foundation of all spirit and mind. Law or right is a necessary concept that one must have; it is a transcendental thought in Fichte's sense and only in this sense is it a topic for philosophy. Not only a thought, however, right is the germ of an existence that with subjectivity is already established as "existing transcendently". Subjectivity exists as the tension between pure indeterminacy and determinate existence, which are one in a concrete free will; the I is on the one hand the anarchic power of "absolute abstraction" (§ 5), negating everything alien to it, while on the other hand it is also finite or particular and in its particularity it is the *positive* I; in truth, however, it is ultimately concrete self-determination, which means neither only negative freedom nor only positive existence, but free positive existence, an existence as free will. Hegel can also say of this will, which was attained as the last determination in the philosophy of subjective spirit, that it is the "substantiality" and "weight" of the subject (cf. § 7). We could say here that concrete free will is a hovering between subjectivity and objectivity; as *concrete* free will it is neither the abstract negation of what is objective as such or the "fury of destruction" (§ 5 Remark), nor is it as concrete *free will* itself merely something objective; the will is much more one that opposes the objective world, a force of resistance to that world seeking really only to mediate itself with the objective world. The demand of the free will to an objectively mediated existence is the claim to subordinate the external world to its own goals. To become *objectively* free in its own right, however, it also has to set its own goals. In the goal or purpose something objective has become subjective, an external something has turned into a reality of relations with the subjective representing itself as what is objective, activity as actual reality, and this is the content of the free will that wills itself in the purpose and as such is self-conscious free will. The self-conscious assertion or setting of goals, which is simultaneously a setting or assertion of itself, Hegel calls "deciding" or "deciding for oneself" (§ 12 Remark). This deciding for oneself is the genuine act with which the individual steps onto the stage of concrete life; "a will that decides nothing", Hegel says, "is not a real will; he who is without character never arrives at a decision" (TW 7, 64). In his opus magnum *The Man without Properties*, Robert Musil describes his protagonist as a highly educated man incapable of taking or unwilling to take decisions and as such a "possibility man", for whom "a real thing" counts "no more than one thought of". Musil says of him that when it came to the next step in the "construction of his

personality", "he began to fantasise instead of making a decision".<sup>10</sup> Almost as if he had known Musil before the novelist's time, Hegel speaks of "a tenderness of sensibility . . ., which knows that in making determinations it gets involved with finitude, in setting itself a limit it abandons infinity, but it does not want to miss the totality . . .", and he adds, "such a sensibility is a dead one, even if it wants to be a beautiful one" (TW 7, 64). Dead it is especially for the world of law, which always presupposes a self-representing concrete and hence limited individual. Now the limitation to this *determinate* purpose, *this* interest, *this* action with which I assert myself is in truth not a loss, but a gain in freedom. For it is only in making its own decisions and representing itself in actual action that the free will becomes the will that is free *in and for itself*; the will that does not lose itself in externality and finitude, but makes them the media of its own rational existence. From the *Logic* we know Hegel's theory of the "true infinity", which is fundamentally different from the formal or bad infinity of Musil's man of possibility. True and actual infinity lies, for instance, in the fact that the hiatus between inner and outer, the subjective and the objective is really bridged; it consists in the experience that we can set foot on this earth without losing ourselves, in the experience that freedom is out there and that as an external reality it is subject to the laws of external reality, but that does not stop it existing as our and as my freedom. Precisely this is the concrete concept of right, the practical representation of the external world as my own as such, or, as in § 29, "that a given being (*Dasein*) as such be the *presence* (*Dasein*) of free will is right".

The *Philosophy of Right* is thus also a theory of freedom, of "the development of the idea of freedom" running through various "levels" (§ 30). It is a fact that Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* studies objects the appearance of which in a theory of law might initially be surprising—that morality is the topic of the second section has already been mentioned. One thinks of the family, which opens the third section, the theory of substantial ethical life, and of world history concluding it. This surprisingly large inventory becomes understandable when one recalls that it is about the theory of the forms in which free will is actually real and externally present, or, in other words, of the forms in and under which *human beings understand themselves to exist as really free*. That begins in the relation of abstract property and moves on to topics like moral existence in opposition to an external world and individual existence as a family member and then again as a citizen. According to Hegel's general division

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10 R. Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Hamburg 1952, p. 21 *passim*; *The man without qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins, New York, 1995, p. 15 *passim*.

of the *Philosophy of Right*, the topic of discussion first under the title “abstract” or “formal” law is the thing-like relation of the will to an “immediately external situation”; then under the title of “morality” comes the immediate self-relation of will and with that “the law of subjective willing”; finally, in “ethical life” the two abstract moments find their “unity and truth”, which is the concept of an external world in which the will can know itself to be one with itself. Once again, we can only consider these three levels briefly.

Under the title of “abstract right” Hegel initially considers *property*, *contract* and then what is only possible once these premisses are given, namely *injustice*, to which then *force* responds. *Property* as such is nothing other than the concept of external reality as a “sphere of freedom” of the person; what this sphere contains, in complete generality, is the matter in which freedom moves, it is what is not personality, in short the “matter” in the legal sense. In the relation of property the will turns itself into the matter or the matter acquires the meaning of the represented will deriving what it is only from freedom and having no truth on its own account distinct from freedom. It is “my” matter and, as the small child already knows, it can be destroyed by me. Hegel speaks here of an “absolute right of appropriation by human beings of all things” (§ 44), and in that sense of a real absence of rights for the things or the matter as such, i.e. for what is objective and unfree with respect to us, which corresponds to the origin of right in the negativity of spirit. In his *Foundations of Natural Right*, Fichte spoke of the original right of property in which the central issue is the basic position of the subject to “his” world;<sup>11</sup> the world is not lord over the subject, but vice versa. It is in property that the individual will initially recognises and knows itself as objectively free will and Hegel describes the abolition of the individual’s right to private property in Plato’s *Republic* as an “injustice against the person” (§ 45 Remark). Conversely, Marxist authors have always been particularly critical of the fact that Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* starts with the theory of property, but Hegel’s objections to Plato hold against this criticism too. Not letting the person be lord over the object means fundamentally “abandoning” the individual as a person, while private property is “necessary” because the “person” becomes “individual” and “actually real” in it and only then, i.e. by means of property, is it possible for “I as such” to “exist” (TW 7, 109). Property emerges through seizure, by which a person lays its will in a matter that is initially “without a lord” (§ 51). “Physical seizure”, however, is not the end of the story; the thing must be “designated” in its new “being”, in its new relation; the fact of its having been taken possession of must be registered; right

11 Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre* § 11, GA 1/3, 407 f. Cf. Baur p. 106.

does not exist without the self-representation of the will in actions and signs that have legal significance. Just as the thing now represents my will, so does the sign (cf. § 58) represent what one can call the ideal status of the matter as the image of my will, as successfully overcome and integrated into my will. The will has now a “*determinate knowable existence*”;<sup>12</sup> it has given itself concrete form, even if at first only in an arbitrary manner, for “that I lay my will in *this* matter” is “contingent”,<sup>13</sup> and it is first in the *contract* with another that the will acquires necessity, if initially only hypothetical necessity.

In the contract we have no longer just a relation of the will to a thing, but a relation of one will to another. The contract, says Hegel, “presupposes that those entering into it *recognise* each other as persons and property owners” (§ 71). This makes explicit what in the sphere of right was from the start presupposed as the domain of objective spirit, namely, that personality, clearly not a natural property of objects, means being recognised as a being endowed with freedom. At this point Hegel makes an interesting observation on the controversial issue of slavery. The argument of the supporters of slavery always comes down to the view of man as a purely natural object, a being that “does not possess reason and rights” (§ 57 Remark). On the opposing side it is held that man is “*by nature* free”, which is “the starting point of truth”, but in this form still an abstraction (ibid.). For, as Hegel has it, the free spirit is spirit that has to and does acquire its freedom itself, which it does by working off the natural determinacy of its consciousness to become *for itself*, autonomously what it is already *in itself*, in its essence. To understand why slavery arose in history, one has to take into account that there is always a consciousness that understands itself from nature, which is precisely not for itself, or autonomously, what it is in itself, inherently. Hegel refers here to the recognition struggle in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (ibid.); the outcome of that struggle was that personality can only exist as the condition of actually being recognised by others and for Hegel it is the task of the *state* to ensure that this stage of being a person as being recognised, which has been achieved for all citizens endowed with rights, not be undermined. This danger is, even in the sense of a ‘dialectic of enlightenment’, never completely eliminated, as we can see in our time, which has no lack of naturalistic images of man or those associated with utilitarianism, with all their implications for the concept of right. Freedom is then only a subjective *ought* yet to be achieved, while the state has to guarantee it objectively, which it does for instance under the title of the dignity of man. Thus can an “individual be recognised as a *person*” by the state as the embodiment of objective spirit even

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<sup>12</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 491.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. § 492.

though that individual “has not achieved the truth of this condition of being recognised as an independent self-consciousness”,<sup>14</sup> from the unborn child to dementia patients, from the naturalists denying the principle of right itself all the way to real criminals.

With the *contract* we have the principle of recognition of citizens endowed with rights and we also know what right (*Recht*) should be in interpersonal terms, so now we can speak of *injustice* (*Unrecht*). In the state of nature, as Hobbes also knew, nobody can do anybody else an injustice;<sup>15</sup> now however we have come to a discrepancy between established right and the mode of appearance of the will, and this situation does not necessarily assume that the will in question desires to commit an injustice. Hegel speaks at first of “disinterested injustice” (§§ 84 ff.), an action that can happen in good faith and only *appear* to be unjust to another. Apparent injustice is an issue in civil law, in which both parties claim to be in the right and require a third party to act as arbitrator to judge their complaint. The general ground of disinterested injustice is the ambiguity of the rights in question, for instance the ambiguity of a contract text, which may be interpreted in contrary fashion by the two parties; each party then claims that the other is not in the right but is committing an injustice and demands the re-establishment of the legal *status quo*. Something quite different happens in the case of the conscious production of the *appearance of right* in order to press unjust claims. Suggestions of this can be found already in the dispute between the parties in a civil complaint, such as when a clever lawyer, knowing that he represents the weaker side, helps his side nevertheless to win. This was the well-known claim to fame of the Greek sophists, who offered their services to precisely this end, τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν, *ton hetto logon kreipon poiein*—to make the weaker case the stronger one, as Protagoras claimed.<sup>16</sup> The next level is the step from objective ambivalence of the legal situations and its exploitation by the opponents to an outright deception in a claim to a right where obviously there is none. Despite the fact that it is now no longer disinterested injustice, however much it still adopts the appearance of recognising rights, it is the essence of *fraud* not openly to deny the right in question. The complete denial of right as such is then the definition of *crime*, which negates recognition as well as right and which sets itself in the form of a “violently evil will”<sup>17</sup> above the other given free will. The criminal

14 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, GW IX, 111; Miller ¶ 187.

15 Hobbes, *Leviathan* I, c. 13, “To this the war of every man against every man, this also is consequent, that nothing can be unjust”.

16 Protagoras, Fragment B 6b, Diels-Kranz.

17 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, § 499.

negates recognition openly and completely so that the personality of the other is destroyed, because the criminal sees the other as nothing but an obstacle in space and time to be removed with spatiotemporal means. The crook regards the other exclusively in his natural individuality and with that asserts only his own naked individuality, not his personality. Logically speaking what happens here is for Hegel a “negative infinite judgment” (§ 95; cf. GW XII, 70; Miller 642), which in fact means the abolition of the entire sphere of law. He points out that crime, precisely because it departs from the sphere of recognition and with that the world of objective spirit, is inherently null and void. Crime is perhaps “interesting”; what is interesting is always something that is in a peculiar way singular; but in terms of its content it is completely banal. Crime is nihilism, not really living or true and it is precisely in this sense that Hannah Arendt could speak so powerfully of the “banality of evil”.<sup>18</sup> The objective representation of the nullity of crime is for Hegel then the essence of punishment. In punishment the common will of law asserts itself against the individual will which denies it; it does so both when the judge expresses the nullity of the crime in the verdict and by proving in the carrying out of a sentence the superior power of law as the compulsion that cannot be resisted by the individual will. In his early writings Hegel spoke of the criminal excluding himself from the totality of ethical life, of life as such as he calls it there, and the essence of punishment as consisting in the confirmation of this exclusion.<sup>19</sup> Punishment, then, does not have only subjective character; it serves neither deterrence nor improvement (as in Fichte), rather it is the self-testing, the self-probation, and as such the self-restitution of objective spirit as the sole legislator of external actions of legal significance through the negation of its negation. This means also that the criminal who has served his term is then unconditionally again a fully recognised individual and reconciled with objective spirit.

In fraud and then in crime subjectivity, the merely particular will, asserts itself against spirit, against the objective reason of right. In *morality* too, however, spirit represents itself as subjective seeking its profile in opposition to the external world. This spirit exists essentially *in the reflection of the subject* and thus for example in the determination and in the ‘right’ of conscience. Morality is not the individual and particular will, but as in Kant or also in the *Phenomenology*, the will to a world of mind and spirit; it is just that now that is not only immediately available, but is subjectively determined or posited, set

18 Vgl. H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, London and New York 1963.

19 Hegel, *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal*—The spirit of Christianity and its fate, especially GW 1, 341 ff.; Nohl p. 279 ff.

as having *come into its own*; all morality is constructive, in that sense positing, setting thinking. While abstract right thus understands freedom as existing in the system of law itself, morality understands it as a *task*, as something that has to be subjectively acquired, which makes the system of law as such alienated freedom. In the moral *demand* the spirit goes purely into itself, indeed never more deeply into itself; now it is at once its own judge and the judge of the whole world, it is both conscience and vanity, or, as Hegel says, it emerges “in the two forms immediately passing into each other of *conscience* and of *evil*”.<sup>20</sup> An obvious historical example of these forms mutually transiting into each other is the lockstep of virtue and terror in the French revolution. Hegel is of the opinion that as sacrosanct as the subjective self-certainty of conscience is, that self-certain subjectivity which turns against objective reason, against external recognition, and ultimately against law is nothing but the collapse of the free will into the complete nullity of the conviction that blindly sets itself up as the measure of all things, essentially like all crime. Here he goes into the well-known situations where from the most noble motives the greatest savagery can result, while also pointing out that the standpoint of pure subjectivity alone, even that of the subjectivity that “means well”, is not a sustainable foundation for people to live together. The subjectivity of conscience claims the “right” to recognise other subjectivity by its own standards, so it does not acknowledge the right of other subjectivity to be already recognised *before* my private recognition. Ideologies have always had difficulties with the concept of law; they demand a homogeneity determined by a given disposition whereas in fact all that is possible is a coexistence in immediate difference. The modes of coexistence of distinct subjects which are not initially mediated by conscious agreement in convictions and dispositions on basic principles forms the topic of the third part of the *Philosophy of Right*, the theory of ethical life.

## 2 World of Ethical Life

The chapter on *ethical life* has always been the cause of considerable astonishment and it is indeed one of Hegel's most important innovations in the philosophy of right and practical philosophy in general. Astonishment was occasioned by the fact that a modern thinker, who ultimately started from Kant, could still rely so heavily on ancient thinking, at least in the first part of this section. For Hegel's concept of “substantial ethical life” includes various reminiscences of the ancient *polis* ethos, even harking back to the archaic right of Antigone

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<sup>20</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, § 511.

preceding the formation of the state. Antigone famously asserted the holy bond existing between family members against its arbitrary abrogation by the state with its *raison d'état*. It all seems to be restoring the old natural law, retreating to a pre-reflexive validity going beyond the person, or at least to a concept of institutions of which one can ask to what extent it may be adequate to the modern self-consciousness of subjectivity, which, after all, Hegel asserts everywhere else. But then we should not forget that our philosopher is inquiring here into the framework in which distinct free wills can live together in freedom, into the structure of a totality capable of accepting a subjective will, of sustaining it and of mediating it with other subjective wills. It is about the unity of subjectivity and the interpersonal such that the two do not eliminate each other, but mutually make each other possible; it is about this unity under the auspices of objective spirit, of the predominance of the universal over the individual in such a way that the individual has the possibility of identifying with this universal and of being by itself within that totality. Freedom here is at once emphatically present and known to be so, i.e. reflected into itself. Ethical life, initially the substantial and completely immediate lived ethos, designates the saturated presence of freedom as such, the seamless concord with the world of mind and spirit. The next thing that happens is that it loses itself, passing through an alienation in order in the end to find itself again as an existence in conscious concord with the external world. The three determinations of ethical life on the path from original unreflected harmony, through alienation to the restoration of a concord between individual and society are *family, society and state*.

Born into the family, the spirited mind existing as an individual knows itself to be immediate and indeed already as physically *embraced* spirit. The family is the publicly declared real will to produce and sustain the person, not just a private affirmation of the individual as such. This will has its "covering" and substantiality in the "real difference" between man and woman, through which the family still belongs to the whole process of self-generation of the species and hence to the life of nature.<sup>21</sup> This is for Hegel what makes the family substantially existing freedom, actual freedom, which the individual does not have to first create and implement, but which he knows to be his *prerequisite*. Aristotle says in the *Politics* that the home precedes all other forms of socialisation;<sup>22</sup> so too for Hegel the natural and ethical unity of the person that is the family and the succession of the generations *precedes* socialisation in a state; this makes marriage much more than a contract, rather an "organic"

21 Cf. Hegel, Anghern et al. eds. (fn. 6 above), p. 96 ff.

22 Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* I, 2.

totality.<sup>23</sup> That said, however, the family member still has its self-consciousness outside itself, its subjectivity is still eccentric to it in an immediate communal spirit, so it is not yet fully individuated. Not acting autonomously or for itself, it is a representative of a totality that constitutes its true self; the dynastic family readily sacrifices the interest of the individual to that of the “clan”. No matter how much the family lays the groundwork for the individual’s getting to know itself on the pathway to recognition, alienation from the family remains the prerequisite for full individuation, for becoming a subject and gaining self-conscious freedom. The family member’s first encounter with a “public universal” in education, usually in school, thus contains a break with the particular immediacy which has been lived up to that point. Hegel opposes all attempts in the name of a so-called ‘playful pedagogy’ to structure the school as a family.

[One must] insist that playful pedagogy is completely wrong as it seeks to bring seriousness to the child as a game and demands of the educators that they let themselves down to the childish sense of the pupils instead of raising them up to the seriousness of the subject to be studied.<sup>24</sup>

In view of more recent experience with ‘educational catastrophes’, the reference to the fact that education should take the student out of the particular and liberate him to the life of the universal is not without contemporary significance independent of Hegel’s concrete historical references.

Through education and then in *society*, in his own societal existence, the individual ‘emancipates’ himself from the bond of the house or the family becoming a subject or a *person among other persons*, externally associating with some and opposing others. Hegel acknowledges that this standpoint of being a subject, of individuation, indeed of atomisation is one that has only emerged in recent times. In this he also acknowledges the dangers that lie therein; hardly anyone before him referred to the dangers of uprooting people and of impoverishment arising from the system of atomised society, which also stands under the dictat of *rationalisation*. In his lectures in the winter semester of 1819/20 for instance, Hegel speaks of the fact that the poor feel themselves to be completely ridiculed by bourgeois society.<sup>25</sup> Bourgeois society is that space

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23 Cf. Hegel, *System der Sittlichkeit*—System of Ethical Life, GW v, 308, marriage “would be a negative contract eliminating precisely that precondition on which the possibility of the contract as such rests; namely personality or being a subject, which is abolished in marriage, in that the whole person surrenders him- or herself as a whole”.

24 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, § 393 Addition.

25 Hegel, Anghern et al. eds. (fn. 6 above), p. 146.

in which the self-consciousness of the individual is cultivated while driving the poor into a destitution that is not any kind of “natural necessity”,<sup>26</sup> but one-hundred percent socially conditioned. The poor man sees that the bourgeois society around him piles up wealth through a system only possible in that society, while excluding him from both, not only from the wealth but from the society too. He sees that in bourgeois society there are institutions for the administration of justice, but he also sees no possibility of these institutions functioning in his interest. In the churches, says Hegel, he sees “the teachers of religion sermonising for an educated public, but the gospel is not preached to the poor”.<sup>27</sup> All of this gives rise to a “discord of sentiment against society”,<sup>28</sup> giving rise to a consciousness which, precisely because it has no rights of its own, cannot recognise any duties either, which is to say it leads to the emergence of the “plebs” (§ 244), as Hegel put it, or of the “proletariat” as Marx said in more learned terms. In bourgeois society then, which after all in its own way represents as a whole the claim to right, thus to the condition of the mutual recognition of all, “privation acquires the blemish, indeed, the form of injustice”, since “finding his subsistence” is designated the individual’s “right”, while in reality he is deprived of “the honour” of “gaining his own subsistence through his labour” (TW 7, 390). Hegel’s unadorned description of bourgeois society in his time is worth emphasising, because it hardly conforms to the image of a philosopher who merely sought to vindicate the facts. The same is true of Hegel’s warning that it lies in the logic of bourgeois society to develop into a police state eventually “intervening into the interior of the families” and not stopping before the entrances to the homes of its members in its attempts to socialise their whole lives.<sup>29</sup> The logic of society is that of a state guided by the understanding addressing the needs of its members, which, given the uncountable and unstructured mass of anonymous and isolated individuals existing together, can do no more than ensure that this living together can continue with as little conflict as possible, that is by setting specific minimum standards of legal security and of the satisfaction of needs. This level of state offers no possibility of really identifying with it, no longer the proud ‘ship of state’ of the ancients, all that is left is a “huge galley”.<sup>30</sup> The state is not one great whole with form and solid contours of its own after the model of the

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid. p. 145.

28 Ibid. p. 146.

29 Ibid. p. 142.

30 Ibid. p. 141.

Greek polis, for which the individuals were freely ready to sacrifice their private interests.

This only happens on the next level, that of the *state* in the real sense of the term. The state is not simply an external association of persons, for it lives from the fact that a totality of persons knows itself to be a community, i.e. something more than a society. For Hegel the state is not grounded in a contract nor in external compulsion; it is grounded in the fact that the individuals constitute a unity encompassing and going beyond space and time, a peculiar kind of ‘total person’, which they trust or which they acknowledge to be their common social sphere. The state is not supported by a society, but by a *people*, by a supra-individual, objective will, that is not the particular will of the individuals, but a unity manifesting a specific individuality based on a common language or culture. In the *Encyclopaedia* we read:

[T]he state is the self-conscious ethical substance—the unification of the principle of the family and that of civil society; its essence is the same unity which in the family exists as the feeling of love, which then acquires the *form of known* universality from the second principle of the informed and autonomous will, which, just as its determinations evolve in knowledge, has knowing subjectivity for its content and absolute goals: it autonomously wills what is rational.<sup>31</sup>

The state is animated by a living spirit that is the actual trust of its citizens, and more dangerous to it than any external enemy is the dissolution of this trust and conviction of its citizens that it does truly represent their interests. The state is a state to the extent that each citizen can in principle say of it, *L'état, c'est moi*—the state is my expanded ego or identity; without it I would be not only another, but less than what I am thanks to it, above all I would be less free in the sense of qualified freedom and objective reason. According to its idea, the state does in general precisely what right is there for, namely to open up the world as my world and conversely to make my liberation as a person in this world possible at all. Clearly it does this within space and time, within historical limitations; it does it as the representation of a “people’s spirit”, as Hegel says with Montesquieu and Herder. The concept of the people’s spirit reminds us that states are not products of reflection, but individuations of spirit, not intellectual constructs, but living beings, which not only think, but also are in a specific sense always prerequisites for the lives of the citizens. The power of integration of a constitution especially in the broader sense of

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31 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, § 535.

the word depends not on abstract consistency, but on self-evidence, which, on the one hand, belongs rather to self-consciousness than to mere consciousness and, on the other, is necessarily historically conditioned as *here and now* understandable.

### 3 Philosophy of History

In their respectively determinate individualities the states are thus the subjects of *history*. We interpret this here in the required brevity as meaning that the states on the one hand are really existing right—real legality is always bound to statehood—while on the other hand they are variously differentiated individuated right and to that extent also have an element of finitude to them. States have their peculiar appearance, marked by space and time, with wholly different expressions as with those of a man at different times of life, faces whose eyes can be directed to completely different things. Thus Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* discuss the “geographical foundations of world history” in detail; the rhythm of life on this earth, as much the life of natural human beings as it is that of mind and spirit and characterised by freedom, is not simply independent of the oppositions of land and sea, river valley and mountain barriers, cultivated land and steppe, north and south. Even the rights and concepts of law of the peoples are tinged with the “climatic” colours and tones of the regions from which they originate. Distinct from “pure” morality, right reflects an objective order of spirit and mind, an order of action, thus also of nature, so there is no need to try to avoid the paradox that right protects what is individual against morality, which, while reflecting *individual* consciousness in contrast to right, it is always oriented fundamentally to universal agreement.<sup>32</sup>

History is then the space in which individuated right collides with individuated right without encountering an encompassing right capable of legally adjudicating this conflict, which is the real motor of history. One can certainly say that international law, in the modern sense as the law between states, was designed to respond to this conflict. But the first, still empirical problem of international law is that its jurisdiction is limited by the will of the states *de facto* guaranteeing it. Not all states are even considered candidates for the guarantee of international law. In reference to Carl Schmitt one could say

32 This is the sense in which Schelling in his *Neue Deduktion des Naturrechts*—New deduction of natural law, 1796, took right to be the order not of obligation, but of permission sustaining individuality.

here that only “great powers” are guarantors of international law,<sup>33</sup> something which they do not do without considering their own vital interests; moreover, they do not have this status permanently but only in specific historical periods. The problem also has a dimension that goes beyond the empirical; the states encounter each other not simply as in the possession of diverging interests, but in real “world-historical” conflicts as representatives of qualitatively distinct principles (cf. § 344), principles in which indeed ‘worlds’ can collide and in which also a ‘world court’, even if one existed, would have to be committed to one party or the other. The structuring of human life according to *sharia* law is not that promoted by Christianity and the Enlightenment; at Thermopylae the whole Greek and Oriental worlds confronted each other, not just local power claims. In logical terms the course of history arises not from a game of differences; it depends much more upon specific negations, on qualitative differences that sharpen into contradiction and which precisely for that reason are not to be satisfied on the level of reflection, of formal settlement or balance. The settlement of competing rights, that is of individuated systems of recognition, results rather from the objective spirit effective in history, it comes into being ‘anonymously’, but not without reason—in fact, it is precisely through objective reason that it comes into being. Hegel says in this sense with Schiller, that “universal world history” itself can be called a “world court”.<sup>34</sup> In it is realised individuated right running into its limits against other, differently individuated right, where it experiences the limited range of its own objectivation, it makes the experience that its concrete legal will is still a *finite* will. There has never been a time nor a culture nor a state that did not live *essentially* in the consciousness of being here and now ‘in the right’—compared to other times, other cultures, other states. This is precisely the point where the decision is referred to history, which decides the matter, not in every individual occurrence or appearance, of course, but in the great historical antagonisms in the emphatic sense. Hegel calls it the “*cunning of reason*” (TW 12, 49; Sibree 47), that while the energies preparing the final conflict derive from the intentions, passions and ambitious plans of the participants, in fact the essence of the *historical* decision is always the inversion of the particular purpose into its opposite so that only in this process does it become a universal purpose. Only of the “world-historical individual” (TW 12, 45; Sibree 44) can it be said that

33 C. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum*—The *nomos* of the earth in the international law of the *jus publicum europaeum*, 4th ed. Berlin 1997, 162 ff.

34 Hegel, *Encyclopaedie*, § 548; cf. Schiller, *Resignation*, verse 17.

here particular and universal purposes are one;<sup>35</sup> beyond that in the historical perspective (which is never the immediate one of a single human being) individuals are the means not the goals of what 'happens'.

It is important not to forget here that we are speaking of history and not of the state, which, however much an objective structure of spirit, still contains "subjectivity . . . developed wholly and solely as vitality" (TW 7, 407; Knox 235)—at least a state of the "modern" type, a state that has completely implemented the Christian principle of freedom and of the absolute value of the individual person in secular reality (TW 12, 31 f.; Sibree 32). The individual, to the extent that being "immediate" to history is even possible for it, confronts history as an alien force, an opaque power, which for the individual itself is only the universal slipping away as a "vanishing being". The state as a whole, however, is itself the persisting mediation of history, at least as long as the state's "principle" is recognised by its court. There is no appeal against the decisions of the court of world history, indeed, they are determined by the nature of those called to this court themselves. If, despite all that, world history is still essentially progress in the consciousness of freedom, if it is read in the sense of a structural gain in logic and freedom, or even, as Hegel sees it, a "theodicy" (TW 12, 540; Sibree 477), then it is also clear that the working away of finitude within it ultimately only throws the free spirit back on itself, setting it as the objective goal of history and, at least initially, confronting absolute spirit. For Hegel there is no history without tragedy, but then its telos is, like that of tragedy itself, the objective gain in knowledge. It sounds rather like illegitimate hypostatising to say that history stores up knowledge, but it does correspond to the structure of self-organising objective spirit; not that this makes it a general insurance against human folly. Still, it cannot be denied that for the single individual the chances of understanding itself as liberated consciousness rather than as slave, shaman or otherwise alienated being are only real at all thanks to this stored up wealth, which relieves it of the need to exert itself to escape a substantially natural condition on its own. In a certain manner the spirit liberated by virtue of its historical location in this way takes the individuals, who have prepared this location unconsciously, as means, as a foundation for its subsistence. And it "is allowed" to do this, for the free spirit knows itself to be determined within history to become the maximal actual reality of its own self. As spirit, which ultimately refers to a thoroughly free actual reality, it has entered into the presence of the *absolute spirit*—itself "internal to history", for art, religion and philosophy are not, or not only, results of objective spirit. If

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35 Cf. above the beginning of section e) Spirit arrives at absolute knowing, in the chapter on the *Phenomenology*.

the state is what it is according to its idea, then it does not stand opposed to the life of the absolute spirit, it is not an obstacle, but the ground on which art, religion and science can develop. Hostility to absolute spirit would put it on the path to losing its right to exist, on the way to facing the judgment of the court of world history.

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## Philosophy of Art

With the *Aesthetics* or, as Hegel would prefer to call it, the “philosophy of fine art”—for “sensibility” (αἴσθησις, *aisthesis*) is precisely what should not be discussed in the philosophy of art (TW 13, 13; Knox 1)—we enter definitively onto the ground of what is not merely more than subjective but also more than objective spirit, the ground of the presence of the absolute in mind and spirit, the ground of absolute, i.e. always *simultaneously* internal *as well as* external, spirit.<sup>1</sup> All forms of absolute spirit are simultaneously external and internal presence, the one is strictly inconceivable without the other. Art, religion and philosophy cannot be understood in terms merely of sensibility and subjective perception, thus also conversely none of them can be understood without releasing subjectivity, without a being-for-the-self realising itself individually.

Here we have to remember two things. The nature of spirit in general was “manifestation” as such, and according to the *Science of Logic*, the absolute too is essentially self-showing, manifestation. So the general topic of the theory of absolute spirit is the self-showing revealing itself as the *manifesting of manifestation*; its ‘object’ is the light that only illuminates itself and ultimately only shows itself, that no longer shows or shines on others. As abstract as they may sound, even when they refer to the level of phenomena, formulations like these are simply manifestly meaningful. For instance, what distinguishes a work of art from an everyday object is that it refers only to itself, not to anything else; although it is an object of sense, its ‘illumination’ lends it an affinity to the concept and to freedom. Even religion is not simply an arbitrary interpretation of the world, but always refers to something clear and distinct within itself, to its revelation as its fixed point, its fulcrum. Misunderstandings of science, religion and art as ‘means’ for purposes external to them and as such merely finite instances are thus *a limine* excluded; all three are essentially autonomous forms of the presence of spirit.

To be fair, their affinity to knowledge and freedom as well as the essence of art lying in the pure self-relation was already discussed by Kant in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In fact, however, in that work Kant took the aesthetic to be a function of the power of reflective judgment and regarded the aesthetic relation purely as a particular manner of making judgments, i.e. as

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1 Hegel lectured five times on aesthetics, in the summer of 1818 in Heidelberg (cf. *Briefe* IV/1, 111) and then four more times in Berlin (cf. the *Index Lectionum*, *Briefe* IV/1, 115–118).

judgments of taste. Expanding the dimension of the philosophy of spirit, Hegel changed the situation with respect to the aesthetic problem decisively. First, it is released from the relatively static perspective characteristic of Kant's view and rendered dynamic. Without turning it completely into art history, in Hegel art acquires an aspect of dynamic diversity, that is a *historical* dimension, just as it reveals a logic of its own specific objective mode of appearance in which it corresponds to the life of the spirit on other levels too—historical, religious and even scientific levels. Clearly the Parthenon and a painting by Rembrandt (with or without Kant) can both in a general sense be called 'beautiful'. *Beauty* is not the only concept that changes in meaning in the course of the centuries; there are also *other* aesthetic predicates, which stand to it in very different relations—predicates like the monumental or also genres, that of the tragic or comic, finally also that of the classic, romantic or fantastic categories, and a philosophy of art must also be a theory of the total order of these predicates including their historical variations.

Hegel goes beyond Kant also by replacing the aesthetic formalism of the Königsberg philosopher with an *aesthetics of content*. In this, however, Hegel is not concerned especially with aesthetic 'statements', with the *specific* meaning of art works, which can vary in the distinct departments of the system of the arts—here once again such a system comes into view—and, indeed, can take on very different values in distinct historical contexts. Finally, Kant's special status of the *genius*, individual subjectivity as the 'location of origin' of art, is qualified by Hegel. Now there is certainly no art for Hegel into which subjectivity is not also overcome; but the difference is that subjectivity here refers to that of the consumer or 'receiver'<sup>2</sup> as much as that of the artist; one can certainly say that for Hegel too art is the subjective form of the appearance of absolute spirit. Still, it is not this or that subject as such who 'makes' art, nor is it the society of subjects that does it; they do not make it into what it is *materialiter*. The agent, the one who 'makes' something here is the absolute spirit itself; just as manifestation, clarity, self-evidence, self-showing are not 'made or done', but can only be recognised as the qualitative being of a self. An art that no longer possessed the wonder of its own radiance, of the '*je ne sais quoi*' and of the free play of meaning, but which had become pure 'product', would have lost the qualitative infinity of art and with that the right to be called art at all.

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2 Hegel speaks expressly of the "genius of the artist and the viewers", *Encyclopaedia* § 562 Remark.

## 1 Past Character of Art

These introductory remarks should have made clear that a productive new initiative in reflection on art awaits us in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, which was so enormously influential in the nineteenth century. As stimulating as they are voluminous, aesthetics like that of Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807–1887) and Max Schasler (1819–1903), for instance, are as unthinkable without Hegel as Karl Rosenkranz' innovative work *Ästhetik des Häßlichen*—Aesthetics of the grotesque.<sup>3</sup> Still, Hegel's philosophy of art had such a great impact not simply because it offered new pathways in the philosophical treatment of the artwork. For all his enormous knowledge and sympathetic understanding of aesthetics, Hegel in fact claimed that by his time in a very real sense the time of art had past, that “art, in terms of its highest determination for us, is something of the past” (TW 13, 25; Knox 11). This assertion of the past character, if not really the “end”, of art has often let Hegel appear in a rather strange light, and that not only for artists and art journalists. It might suggest that once again pure thought had gone so far with a professor of philosophy that he was hardly capable any more of perceiving what was actually going on around him. For what could it mean to say that with contemporaries like Goethe, Beethoven or Caspar David Friedrich, art was “something of the past”? And what was it supposed to mean to decree for all time, as it would appear, that for Dostoyevski and Joyce, for Manet and Paul Klee, for Brahms and Alban Berg *a priori* they would have no claim to an at least ‘higher’ right to existence?

One of the possible solutions might be that a specific mode of existence of art together with the ‘metaphysical’ aesthetic fixed on the idea of the beautiful belonging to it had become obsolete; but then art and aesthetics could establish themselves anew in a sense that was perhaps completely alien to Hegel himself. Hegel would then be seen as standing on the threshold of a new epoch, looking ahead to it perhaps, but still proving—not necessarily a criticism—that he too was a child of his time and not after all a resident of all times. Another suggestion for understanding Hegel's statement on the so-called “end of art” might take an ‘art sociological’ approach, showing that art in new milieus characteristic of the epoch of the masses would acquire other functions than it had in earlier, in for instance the ‘bourgeois’ milieus of Hegel's

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3 F. Th. Vischer, *Aesthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*—Aesthetics or the science of beauty, 4 vols., Reutlingen and Leipzig 1846–1857; M. Schasler, *Aesthetik als Philosophie des Schönen und der Kunst*—Aesthetics as philosophy of the beautiful and of art, 2 vols., Berlin 1872 (reprint Aalen 1971); K. Rosenkranz, *Aesthetik des Häßlichen*—Aesthetics of the grotesque, Königsberg 1853 (reprint Darmstadt 1973).

time, or indeed than it ever could have had then. That would imply approaching art from its aspect of objective spirit, from its manifestations in world-historical constellations.<sup>4</sup> Against both attempts to understand Hegel's thesis stands the fact that, as we know well by now, it was Hegel himself who did not take art statically, but as a process of the unfolding of its concept and its complete actuality. Thus Hegel was perfectly capable of regarding art in terms of very different 'functions' in the various contexts of historically emerging human life worlds. For Hegel it is clearly *not* a problem that the Parthenon was a manifestation of a kind of spirituality which was structured very differently from that of the Medieval *minnelied*, that Egyptian sculpture concentrated within it a different world of spirit from modern interiority, which expresses itself primarily in music. Hegel's thesis on the "end" of art must be read with a keen consciousness of the fact that Hegel himself did not defend a timeless and normative concept of art, simply applying it to the present, but held rather that all parameters on which the artistic nature of art was to be measured were themselves also in flux.

This all makes his thesis even more provocative and may make it sound like the abrupt abandonment of that great enterprise of conceptualising the vitality of art precisely in its permanent self-transformation. This does indeed raise some problems and here we can say no more on the matter than that Hegel does claim that art has finally lost its absolute necessity as a mode of existence for the absolute; art has ceased to be any kind of final judgment. Hegel says that today reason *as* reason no longer speaks through art. The message of art as the "reconciled sensuous expression of spirit" (TW 13, 123; Knox 89) has always been that reason, that intelligibility as such is *there*, indeed that it is there amongst us. It is even to be found in the medium of the sensuous, i.e. even there where one did not normally seek reason. The message of art was that the objective—an external object, a sensuously present tone, a word spoken by another—can be "externality overcome" and for that reason was capable of being a medium of freedom, which means, once again, not simply a mandatory *given*, not an external *power*. For Hegel this message of the incarnation of freedom is basically already accepted; it has emerged out of its objective presence and at least *implicitly* has passed over into self-consciousness. This means that art no longer has anything to say to a (free) self-consciousness that it does not already know. It no longer reveals any genuine revelation or the free space of the spirit, but now only shows free self-consciousness busying itself

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4 When Hegel says that "the history of the religions falls together with world history", *Encyclopaedia* § 562 Remark, the tight interrelations between art and religion imply an analogous simultaneity for the relation between world history and the history of art.

with itself in various ways. That may not be without significance, but for free self-consciousness as such, it is no longer constitutive. Art is no longer the eye through which the modern world discovers itself.

This of course implies the complementary thesis that art previously *was* constitutive for self-consciousness, that it was indispensable for self-consciousness to find itself. We cannot remove tragedy from ancient Greece without depriving it of one of its decisive, defining characteristics. The Greeks did not in fact have a choice whether to have the world in the medium of their tragedy, of their sculpture or not. For us, in contrast, art is essentially something that is *willed*; it has become something that is asserted freely, which means that the freedom and the will to art are now more original, more fundamental than art itself and hence that the latter is, precisely for this reason too, at an end. Between us and art a distance of reflection has opened up, which not only turns the relation of art into a practical one, but even into a scientific one. We no longer fall on our knees before a Madonna of Rafael—we could only do such a thing in good conscience as long as we experience in it more than ourselves, more than our ‘true self’—instead we conserve it in the museum and in the concept, even accepting that there always remains something inexpressible in it. Neither do we any longer live really with and from literature and music, rather we give prizes for literature and art because we *want* literature and art to remain living. Seen in this light Hegel’s “end of art” thesis contains a radical diagnosis well formulated to blow away much recent aestheticising froth that contributes but little to enlightening us about what we really have before us in a work of art. Art that appears in any light other than the light it gives itself is reduced in its power to a mere appearance that has its focus outside itself and precisely for that reason is no longer what it could be as art. Hegel explains this reduction in the power of art as due to the fact that in the artwork both form and content are merely finite; neither the perceptible medium nor the concrete artistic concept given expression in the artwork measure up to the idea of art, they are both limiting; indeed, limiting in principle (cf. TW 13, 23 f.; Knox 9). The last stage of artistic development is the ironical self-destruction of art which assures us that it is the only thing that really serves the acknowledged need of the time for art. Hegel opposes romanticism as the reduction of the content of art to what is “interesting” for instance with the statement, “thought and reflection have surpassed art” (TW 13, 24; Knox 10). Nevertheless he emphasises his commitment to the (Christian) romantic concept of art, in the sense of a concept of a consciousness that no longer stands under the *spell* of art. Thus, however much Hegel’s thesis is conceived in the spirit of Plato’s attempt to break this spell once and for all, our philosopher is still capable of saving the world of art by grounding it in the concept. His philosophy of art is dedicated

to the “logical-metaphysical nature” (TW 13, 26; Knox 11) of art; the fact that art has such a nature at all was not self-evident in Plato’s time.

## 2 Concept of Art

“The universal need for art”, says Hegel, “is the rational one that man must elevate the inner and outer world to spiritual consciousness as one object, in which he recognises his own self” (TW 13, 52; Knox 30). Art belongs to the human project of replacing mere nature with spaces of spirit and mind and building “anthropic” worlds within them. “The artwork stands in the *middle* between immediate sensuousness and ideal thought” (TW 13, 60; Knox 38); it is this position that makes it especially comparable to the *tool*. It is a coincidence that the Greek word *téchne* and the German *Kunst* both refer to both the “fine” and the “craft” arts without ever creating any confusion. They both include both arts and crafts as, indeed, no “fine” art is possible without an element of the technical, that is of the mastery of nature. Still, the mediation of art is not, like that of craft and technical work, directed to *finite* goals. It addresses the world of man as a *total unity*. Schelling spoke of the fact that the philosophy of art is really knowledge of art from the cosmos or from the absolute or the “*science of the cosmos in the form or potentiality of art*”.<sup>5</sup> While Hegel has a ‘weaker’ concept of nature than Schelling, he avoids short-circuiting the link between cosmos and art, for, as he sees it, art’s horizon of meaning can only be a totality and no mere particularity. An artistically valuable portrait for instance does not show a human being as a piece of the objective world; it is not as in photography “even sickeningly similar” (TW 13, 67; Knox 43) and thus only collecting “facts”. A portrait shows a person *as a world*, or it shows *in and with him* a whole that could not be revealed in sensuous terms in any other way. Mimesis or *imitatio* is not the principle or real ground and foundation of art; where that is the case it only produces “stunts” not “*artworks*” (TW 13, 69; Knox 45). Emotion and passion are just as little the ground and foundation of art, which also holds for any kind of “moral content”. None of these so-called principles can give us a *free* art; in none of them could art be seen as the mirror of human freedom. The *goal* of really free art is *art itself*; only understood as an end in itself is art capable of truth, i.e. of exhibiting the absolute truth of the idea. Precisely because the actuality of art as art is “to reveal the *truth* in the form of sensuous artistic expression, the reconciled opposition”, just for that it has

5 Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, WW vol. III, p. 388. Cf. English in *The Philosophy of Art* by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, translated by Douglas W. Stott, Minneapolis 1989, p. 16.

“its ultimate goal in itself, in this representation and revealing as such”; “other goals, like instruction, improvement, making money, seeking after fame and honour, have nothing whatsoever to do with the artwork as such and do not determine its concept” (TW 13, 82; Knox 55).

Free art’s link back to truth is certainly not to be interpreted as intellectualising art. The radiant power of art is not a theoretical one, its clarity is not that of the *conscious* concept. The truth, the ‘logos’ of art is the gathering in beauty, which, as Hegel has it, is “the sensuous showing of the idea” (TW 13, 151; Knox 111). The presupposition behind this concept is Hegel’s theorem in the logic of reflection, the first section of the logic of essence in the *Science of Logic*, that the reflection as ‘shine’, the static reflection image, is not simply *untrue*, but can be a specific, positive reflection of the truth. Reflection in this sense is the overcoming of qualitative, sensuous determinate being into a relation that lives from the power of the logical nature of the idea. The restorer of a painting is not dealing with a work of art, but with a finite qualitative being; the art dealer handles an object possessing monetary value; the art historian deals with a document of an epoch and its ‘taste’, with the material conditions and social relations in which the artist stood, etc. None of this, however, relates in any way at all to the *ontology*, to the logical-metaphysical nature of the work of art. Conversely only this latter can explain *why* a work of art deserves to be restored, why it ultimately possesses a monetary ‘value’ at all, and why the study of art accumulates so many details about the piece. Like all other forms of absolute spirit, one of the great axes of life turns in art, setting so much else in motion too, while itself no longer really being driven by others. Beauty thus designates an “autonomy” that reaches into the empirical without losing its character as a protest against the empirical. Nature is certainly not without its manifestations of beauty, namely that which appears in its freedom and autonomy, from the planetary system (TW 13, 158; Knox 117) to animal automotion (TW 13, 165; Knox 122), which can also be “more beautiful” than the motion of human beings, disturbed and irregular as it may be by the consciousness of goals. There are in nature indeed analogies of spiritual and intellectual patterning and presence, including the lawful regularities and harmonies in its appearance, which might even suggest a self-consciousness. In contrast to for instance Schelling, for whom “the universe . . . in God” is “an absolute artwork”,<sup>6</sup> for Hegel what is lacking in nature and with that also in what is naturally beautiful is the true infinity, the moment of the self-relation of mind and spirit overcoming the opposition of “inner” and “outer”. In this

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6 Schelling *ibid.* p. 405. Cf. English in Stott *ibid.* p. 30.

sense, as indicated above,<sup>7</sup> it is natural beauty that is mimetic of spirit rather than the other way round; as natural, life remains sentient in itself and never arrives at an “appearance . . . rising out of the series of finite phenomena” as “a qualitative being worthy of truth” (TW 13, 202; Knox 152). Thus the topic of the *Aesthetics* is really only the beautiful in art and this is at first “the ideal”; the equivalence of artistic content and appearing actuality, the “leading back . . . of external qualitative being into spirit” (TW 13, 206; Knox 156).

Hegel distinguishes three moments of the ideal constituting the basic aspects under which art can be considered. The “ideal as such”, its appearance as the “determination as a work of art”, and finally “the productive subjectivity of the artist” (TW 13, 202; Knox 152); *content*, *work* and *production* are the aesthetic aspects corresponding to the rhythm of *universal*, *particular* and *individual* moments of the concept, which here manifests as the art type. The ideal as such is the content of all art, i.e. its universal soul, which looks out at us from the thousand eyes of the artworks (TW 13, 203; Knox 153). No real artwork is only something merely looked at, as the ‘reception aesthetic’ has it, for the artwork sees too, it looks and finds what it is looking for. What the seeing of the ideal shows is again only the ideal itself as “sensuously blissful in itself, enjoying itself and happy about itself” (TW 13, 207; Knox 157), also, of course, taking us into its seeing, into its bliss. Hegel warns here against a one-sided fixation of the universal of art, of the ideal, which—in the manner of the classicism initiated by Johan Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768)—can lead all too quickly to a formalist concept of art wholly confined to reflection (TW 13, 212; Knox 161). The concrete determinacy of the ideal excluding this abstraction does not result from a normative orientation to the ‘natural’ in the sense of realism or naturalism, even if the natural moment in art is where differentiation begins. Concrete determinacy may not be left out of the ideal. Thus the ideal reveals itself in the form of *specific*, *determinate* “souls” or “gods”, in a “circle of gods” (TW 13, 231; Knox 171).<sup>8</sup> Now here again differences are active and productive relations, so the *action* emerges as an integral moment of art determined by content. *Action* as the concrete tension and intensity of a particular goal set against other goals in the framework of the general conditions of the world happens, as Hegel sees it, in all art, not only in what one first associates it with, namely in dramatic or epic art. Action is also to be found in music for instance; music is action within and oriented to totality. The same is true of buildings

7 Cf. p. 312 above.

8 Analogously Schelling, who “constructs” the “stuff of art” as “ideas” or “gods”, *ibid.* p. 410. Cf. English in Stott *ibid.* p. 34 f.

too if architecture is understood as the founding of concrete locations full of meaning in a more general horizon. Action forces the ideal into appearance as its determinate content, it links it to the laws of appearance—the laws of colour, tone, of linguistic enunciation, which are not simply free creations of art but its material substrate and its persistent externality. Art is never *purely* synthetic, it is always dependent upon *resonance* in the material. The truth of the determinate ideal is the inner reasoning ‘action’ of form in material and vice versa within the artwork; which is precisely why artworks are only actual as individual formations, only as ‘originals’. This moment of individuation leads on to the individual who produces the artwork, to the artist. As a form of absolute spirit art *is* only in itself by being explicitly *for* subjectivity, for the subjectivity that has become prominent by virtue of talent and even genius (and in that sense, initially at least, by virtue of a natural distinction) of the creative individual, but also for the viewing consciousness that is creative after the fact, as it were, which can only function as a *free* relation to art as art. This freedom does not exclude “inspiration” and “objectivity” as moments of the original constitution of the art relation.

In all true creative literature, thought and action let true freedom, the substantial as a power, function within it, which at the same time is so much the most characteristic power of subjective thinking and willing itself that in the complete reconciliation of the two no discord can remain” (TW 13, 385; Knox 298).

Plato’s “divine illusion” (θεῖα μανία, *theia mania*) was the power of the upswing to the pure idea of the beautiful, with that also the power to reach a ‘higher’ and freer self-relation than the empirical self-relation.<sup>9</sup> It is the artists who throw open the doors to ways of relating to the things that are as free as they are grounded in new material relations—artists who then also do not concentrate on their *contingent* manner and ‘originality’, but who know that the dignity of the *origo*, the source of artistic presence, is wholly overcome into the art itself.

### 3 Art Ideal and System of Art Forms

The second part of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* is devoted to the “development of the ideal into the particular forms of the beautiful in art”. Hegel’s division into symbolic, classic and romantic art forms rests on a rhythm that corresponds to

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<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Phaidros*, 265 a–b.

oriental, ancient and Christian art determined by the three possible relations of the content of art, its 'meaning', to the sensuous art product, its 'form'. In symbolic art, whose 'leading category' is the sublime, the aesthetic appearance predominates over the content; spirit is still "searching" for itself and encounters abstract signs and riddles that remain unsolvable. Hegel calls this first art, which extends from the fetishes of early cultures up to the art of Egypt, "pre-art" (TW 13, 408; Knox 316). The 'statement' of this art is the affirmation of the opaque power, the persistent foreignness of the absolute against what is individual, which is why it shows the absolute not as an individual, but only as something possessing external power. The Greek god in human form first 'reconciles' *is* and *ought* in art; here the ideal is realised in terms of the beautiful as the leading category of classical art. The eternal meaning of art in absolute spirit according to its idea at last acquires its own actuality here, which is "the free, *autonomous* meaning, i.e. not a meaning of something or other, but what is *meaningful to itself* and hence also *interpreting itself*" (TW 14, 13; Knox 427). Nowhere else did art reach this highest level of sensuous revelation than among the Greeks—indeed, it went so far among them that art was the real "revelation" of the Greeks, apart from philosophy that is; their religion is the "religion of art". Their position with respect to the world is defined by the "tangible, touchable" closeness of the divine along with the "degradation of the animal aspect" (TW 14, 36; Knox 445), the elevation of man as the one *for* whom the revelation is given. Still, even Greek art did not reach the final expression of totality. It does not reach the absolute necessity of the great whole—the gods of Greece are entangled in stories that retain "an element of contingency", of "arbitrariness" (TW 14, 108; Knox 500), besides being subject to *μοῖρα*, *moira*, ineluctable fate—and neither does it succeed in attaining the complete individuation of the absolute, the knowledge of an "actuality in flesh and spirit" in the "existence, life and works of God himself" (TW 14, 112; Knox 505 f.), as in Christianity. These deficiencies refer ultimately to the limits imposed upon art by its finite medium and it is art itself that delineates these limits in satire, which announces that the ideal is lost. For Hegel satire, which flourishes especially in the Roman period, is the "form of transition out of the classical ideal" (TW 14, 123; Knox 514), its sceptical "retirement", perhaps only paralleled by the so-called "transcendent style" of late Roman sculpture. The artwork begins to point to something which it is not; the inadequacy of form and meaning so characteristic of symbolic art re-emerges, only now the meaning predominates over the form or the 'sign', not the converse as in symbolic art. Spirit is here not searching, it has *found* what it seeks—only not in art, but elsewhere and the artwork can only represent the longing for that which in itself is already known. We are now on the ground of the romantic art form, which for Hegel is

essentially that of Christianity. The classical “unification that was executed in the element of the external, thereby making sensuous reality into an appropriate existence, is resisted again by the true concept of the spirit, which pushes it out of its reconciliation in the bodily back into itself, back to reconciliation of itself within itself” (TW 14, 128; Knox 517 f.). A self-consciousness has awoken that announces its claim itself to be the location of manifestation and to resist all diminution of this status by physical manifestations in empirical appearance. The aesthetic leading category here is that of “*spiritual beauty*”, of the beautiful interiority and as such then of *subjectivity* (TW 14, 129; Knox 518). On the level of content the topic becomes the circles of the story of salvation and “the eternal action” is the “absolute final goal, divine love in its eternal happening” (TW 15, 406; Knox 1103), while the relations and claims of self-conscious subjectivity with its “honour, love, loyalty and bravery” (TW 14, 142; Knox 528) are now given attention for their own sakes. The special topic of the romantic art form is *love*, divine as well as earthly; but romanticism, which shows all things unselectively in the light of their subjective meaning, ultimately loses itself in humour, in irony or also in naïvity—also in the prose of the things it loads with subjective ‘meaning’. If these days there is no necessary content for the artist, no canonical objects exist any more so that in this respect the artist is a “*tabula rasa*” and is “equally open” to all and any material (TW 14, 235; Knox 605), this also goes back to the fact that art itself, in that it has brought “the material living within it to objective intuition”, has also made “a contribution to freeing itself from the content presented” (TW 14, 234; Knox 604). Now “the artist” turns out to be “the master of the god”;<sup>10</sup> art itself breaks the substantial bond to which it owes its existence and presents itself in “late Roman” form at best as this breaking. Despite all that Hegel does acknowledge a mission for the contemporary artist, which is to represent on the ground of the breaking of limitations “what is universally human in its pleasures and sorrows, its strivings, actions and destinies” and to that extent “everything in which human beings are capable of being at home” (TW 14, 238; Knox 607), to make it all transparent to the consciousness of the present. If it is indeed the “calling” of art “to bring out what is in itself full of content to more adequate, more sensuous presence” (TW 14, 242; Knox 611), then, even when art no longer has a primarily “revelatory character”, this sensuous exposition of the content that bears the weight of life still remains a truly human activity. Existences founded on reflection which are ultimately completely devoid of art, having resulted not only from the history of religion, but to a far greater extent from the so-called rationalisation of human life, always rest upon an abstraction of the

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10 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 560.

human being existing as concept. But the concept is also the power of resonance, the return to itself out of what is other than it, not the synthetic identity of isolated consciousness that is, as one might say, “free of upper partial tones”. Anyone who speaks a living language instead of speaking in ‘judgments’ has already understood this.

The third part of Hegel's *Aesthetics* contains the “system of the individual arts”, which presents the types of art as such in their interplay once again with a great abundance of concrete details. In a motion that leads from architecture to poetry, epochal, universal and systematic aspects cut across each other; in all three stages we encounter productions in all types of arts, but then they always have different values. While the symbolic phase of art was dominated by architecture, this recedes almost completely in our Protestant rational present. Sculpture, in contrast, is the “art of the classical ideal” (TW 14, 372; Knox 718), but can no longer provide “the grounding for the other arts and for the whole existence” once romantic art has taken hold (TW 14, 458; Knox 789). At best a Michelangelo might “be able to unite . . . the plastic principle of the ancients with the type of ensoulment that lies in romanticism” (TW 14, 460; Knox 790). The romantic arts are painting, music and poetry—arts that, according to their predisposition, are capable of encompassing *everything*, arts that suppress space and open themselves to time, indeed, as especially music, forming time, which is precisely what gives them such easy access to interiority and spirituality. Materiality, as we said indispensable for all arts, is most limited and reduced in poetry, the art of language, which operates in a medium that is immediately intelligible, referring fantasy to images already known, all of which makes it easy for it to move on into non-aesthetic activities of reflection. Poetry, “the speaking art”, is for Hegel always the highest of all arts to the extent that it “is the *totality* that unites within itself the extremes of the *plastic* arts and *music* on a higher level in the realm of spiritual interiority itself”, but further also “forms the third aspect to *painting* and *music* as the *romantic* arts” (TW 15, 224). The three forms of poetry, epic, lyric and dramatic, describe the last possible move into mind and spirit, the pathway from what is still predominantly objective and linking, through the interiority of the sensibility representing itself, up to the interiority that is objective to itself, generating itself in action with respect to another objective interiority. The drama, which lays the content of art wholly in the language that has grown into action or plot is the real *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the total work of art, the integration of all diverging artistic impulses into a concentrated unity. Nowhere else but here can the absolute be sensuous and still absolute, precisely because it is only present in the inherently transitory, fleeting action of language. Here too, however, it can, as in comedy, only show itself *ex negativo*; as Hegel, who was inspired to this

conclusion by Karl Solger (1780–1819), his younger colleague at the university in Berlin, saw the culmination of the romantic art form precisely in comedy, followed by its ultimate dissolution. Comedy, which is the representation of the appearances of human action as not absolute actions at all, is the finger pointing to a mode of existence of the spirit that certainly does not lie in the sensuous. It is the finger pointing to a selfness that finds its truth not in the empirical, but immediately in the absolute. The proximate truth of art, even of that which has left the link to religion behind, is religion.

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## Philosophy of Religion

Philosophy has always had several options open to it in matters religious, from a more or less sympathetic phenomenology or hermeneutics right across the spectrum to damning critique. In its metaphysical tradition philosophy has left all that behind and articulated a need for knowledge with its ‘philosophical theology’, which shows at least a certain affinity to religion finding, as it does, self-certainty in the absolute. With the ‘end of metaphysics’ this last option seems to be all but obsolete and what remains to philosophy is an attitude to religion that is either friendly or critical, but only partially based on a common interest. Hegel’s philosophy of religion, as a first encounter soon reveals, seeks to find once again a combination of all possible positions of philosophical thinking on religion, including a dialectical philosophical theology. According to their own points of view then interpreters find historical analysis, a hermeneutics or the critique of religion in Hegel’s philosophy of religion, but one thing they all find here is *philosophical theology*. Now while it cannot represent positive religion in its historical and individual function, and hence does not seek to, Hegel’s initiative arises from the philosophical “need for totality” and proposes a specific manner of bringing the ground of the concept into thinking.

### 1 Concordance Thesis

“Philosophy” is, as Hegel says at one point, “the knowledge of the absolute being, that is theology” (TW 19, 546). Elsewhere he says more emphatically, “the object of religion as well as that of philosophy is *the eternal truth* in its objectivity itself, God and nothing but God and the explication of God” (TW 16, 28). There is in Hegel, as a whole series of quotations could show, something like a thesis of the synchronicity of religion and philosophy, of a *concordance* of the two according to their respective contents. This thesis may be surprising not only because of historical collisions;<sup>1</sup> collisions which in each case show

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1 The cases of Bruno and Galileo, for example, are cited by Hegel as evidence that the “freedom of thought and of the sciences” is guaranteed not by the church, but by the state (*Philosophy of Right* § 270 Remark—GW XIV/1, 221). It is precisely because the state based upon the rule of law which understands itself correctly makes *no* claim to contain the absolute spirit within itself that it can *set* art, religion and science *free*.

that religion and philosophy do not belong on different planets, but on the same earth and essentially both lay claim to the same terrain. It is a fact that religion and philosophy in many respects cannot simply exist indifferently beside one another. The view “that faith in the content of positive religion” can continue “even when reason has convinced itself of the opposite” (TW 16, 55), that there can thus seriously be a conscious and consciously willed “*sacrificium intellectus*”, is no less obtuse than, say, the view that religion and philosophy are just simply idiosyncratic ‘language games’, between which one and the same subject can flit back and forth at will. Neither the philosopher nor the *homo religiosus* will be able to accept this last position, however congenial it may at first appear. Religion and philosophy are both oriented to totality, so both make the same claim to the attention of the individual and not only on a case by case basis, for they claim to *totalise* the individual himself, to make him into a living whole, living only from the whole. Thus between religion and philosophy in the strict sense there are only two possible relations. The relation is either polemical and antithetical or it is one of a principal concordance and it is the latter that Hegel seeks. We will see that with this he means neither that philosophy must uncritically affirm every form and every content of positive religion without examination, nor conversely that religion must find a way of accommodating itself to every form and every content of thought just as it finds it; philosophy legitimates the human sacrifice of the Aztec religion as little as religion submits to a philosophy of the understanding like naturalism or to the dictates of a ‘unified science’. None of this entails the denial of all differences, including structural differences, between religious and philosophical knowledge, nor of those between lived religion and philosophy. The determinate knowledge of the interrelationship between the two falls in the range of philosophical knowledge, not in originally religious consciousness;<sup>2</sup> the latter relates to its content and thus to itself essentially as observing, i.e. symbolically, and lacks the determinate concept of itself and that of its position in the world. Hegel’s concordance thesis does not exclude critical distance; it attempts rather conceptually to define that distance too and to understand it from its ground. As we shall see, its community and ritual binding, both appealing to a ‘universal spirit’, give religion a determinate structural component from the sphere of objective spirit, that is an authoritative institutional aspect, which as such can have no meaning in philosophy; indeed, it may even

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2 This is shown by Hegel’s observations in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* such as the following, “Philosophy as the thinking of conceptual comprehension has the advantage over the imagination at play in religion that it can understand both; it can understand religion . . . and itself; but the converse is not the case.” TW 18, 101.

constitute a power alien to philosophy. All of that, however, does not diminish the fact that for Hegel it is always the same spirit 'in itself' at work in religion and in philosophy, which is why there is no reason why the two should not talk to each other; even if they only argue, they can still learn from each other.

As we have seen, from his youth Hegel attached great importance to the questions of theology as well as to those of religion (like 'philosophy of art' and 'aesthetics', the two are not the same). These matters are extensively handled in the early writings and the crucial chapter on religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has a hinge function opening up the threshold to absolute spirit, the final stage in which spirit as such becomes objective to itself. The last word on these matters we have then in the late works, in the *Encyclopaedia* and more especially in the Berlin *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. The student lecture notes from Hegel's four courses on the philosophy of religion<sup>3</sup> were edited and combined for the edition of the *Association of Friends* by Philipp Konrad Marheineke. Despite all the problems, this work bears impressive witness to philosophical thinking on theology and religion and was the last undertaking of its kind to set new standards in the area of philosophical theology and the philosophy of religion with the exception, perhaps, of Schelling's late philosophy. In fact, the central and really decisive religious question became one of the most important points of conflict, splitting the Hegel school and the public too very soon after the philosopher's death.<sup>4</sup> The question was exactly what position did Hegel take with respect to God and to Christianity and its individual articles of faith? Was Hegel not trying to bring objective religion to 'vanishing' into the realms of philosophy, disappearing into the concept? Right and left Hegelians, and even a reconciliatory centre between them, leapt into the fray with unreconcilable answers already complete. On the right, Hegel was seen as something like a church father of modern times by theologians like Daub and Marheineke, as also by the latter's student, Göschel. On the left Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) and Bruno Bauer (1809–1882) made a great deal of noise claiming that with the final iconoclasm of the dissolution of the religious imagination into its conceptual truth, our philosopher initiated the "secularisation of the idea", its ἐνσάρκωσις, *ensarkosis*, the "incarnation of the pure logos".<sup>5</sup> Controversy raged on questions like the personality of God, individual

3 Cf. the *Index Lectionum* in *Briefe IV/1*, 115–119; Hegel gave the last of the courses in the summer semester of the year of his death, 1831.

4 Cf. J.E. Erdmann, *Die deutsche Philosophie seit Hegels Tode*—German philosophy since Hegel's death, Berlin 1896, reprint Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1964, 684–709 for an overview.

5 Cf. L. Feuerbach's unanswered letter to Hegel of 22 November 1828, *Briefe III*, p. 245 not in Butler and Seiler.

immortality and on the questions of Christology, this latter initiated by David Friedrich Strauß (1808–1874). There were several attempts by his students to develop philosophies of religion of their own in one way or another inspired by Hegel. Georg Friedrich Daumer, already mentioned above as one of Hegel's pupils in Nuremberg, turned to pantheism<sup>6</sup> and then there is the very different case of the cryptic theology of an anonymous author, who claimed to trace the tangled path from the “abstract” to the “theological God” in a book with the title *Hegels Gotteslehre und Gottesfurcht*—Hegel's doctrine of God and fear of God.<sup>7</sup> These controversies certainly stimulated discussion at first, but they quickly became repetitive and are all long forgotten together with most of their participants; that cannot be said of Hegel's philosophy of religion itself, however, which is anything but confined to the archives.

## 2 Hermeneutics of Religion

The key to this second of the sciences of absolute spirit lies in the concept of absolute spirit itself, which in religion becomes objective and *explicit as* spirit. Without any kind of scientific fuss religion is capable of providing clarity even for the simplest of souls on the fact that we stand in spiritual and not only in natural relations and that our definition lies in the greatest possible presence of spirit and is not exhausted by our animal natures. Spirit was also the foundation and the general topic of all art, which makes it shine in sensuous images while simultaneously obscuring and even concealing it precisely in that *sensuousness*. If religions, including Christianity, repeatedly suffer outbreaks of hatred of art and iconoclasm, that happens because religion is the ‘disclosure’ of the spiritual and the affirmation of its autonomy, while art still refers to a spirit bound and concealed and at best only becoming manifest in the form of things, in forms heteronomous to spirit. Religion negates the imagination as the medium of spirit, but it does not for that reason necessarily free itself from the form of the *imagination*. Then again *in* this form it affirms what is inherently not of the imagination, beyond objectivity and inherently free in the spirit. Absolute religion, as we shall see, expresses spirit as imagining itself in its relation to itself and to others and as the spirit that reveals itself. A spirit that is simultaneously self-relation and relation to another and that is both

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6 On Daumer as well as on the somewhat Catholic critique of Hegel by Albert K. Kreuzhage (1797–1848) cf. the critical analysis by K. Rosenkranz, *Kritische Erläuterungen des Hegel'schen Systems*—Critical exposition of Hegel's system, Königsberg 1840, pp. 309–325.

7 Anonymus, Leipzig 1846.

only through each other is a person or 'absolute personality'; in fact spirit in religion is known to be not any kind of thing, but the personality confronting man, spirit as God. If, as religion teaches, God is the creator of the world and the saviour of man, then *eo ipso* the immediate, finite determination of the sphere of things and of consciousness lose their normative power—and precisely here lies the powerful impulse of religion for consciousness, that it frees consciousness from all objective binding and teaches it how to think in relations that go beyond objectivity. Religious thinking has "overcome the world" into itself. The content of religion as such, as Hegel says at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Religion*, is the relation of the spirit "no longer to something other and limited, but to what is unlimited and infinite, . . . a relation of freedom", whose point of reference "is the unconditioned, free and final goal for itself" (TW 16, 12). The normative point of reference 'outside' is not the givenness of the objects, but the freedom of its origin, the presence of mind and spirit, the revelation of God. Once again we see the difference with art. Art is not a relation of free beings as persons; art's form makes it a 'thing-like' mediation of freedom; its power is 'anonymous' and it remains a non-comprehended encounter. Art leads initially only to the concept of a *qualitative being* and an *appearance* of the free as such; it remains within the bounds of immediacy and otherness that characterise qualitative being. In contrast, religion subjugates qualitative being by asserting it to be set by the concept, a function of reason. Moreover, art is the appearance of the absolute *in* creation, which it presupposes; religion on the other hand knows the absolute as the prerequisite of creation and demonstrates this *sub specie dei*. Hegel attaches the greatest significance to the old *ontological* proof of God's existence by Anselm of Canterbury as well as Descartes' and Leibniz' versions for understanding the concept of God.<sup>8</sup> Its importance lies in the fact that this proof focuses upon the presuppositionless *absolute* spirit—absolute because it is not to be reached from any third position—the spirit that now gives linguistic expression to all meaning as the intelligible self. This argument demonstrates that there is nothing formal about the concept of spirit at its peak, in its truth, for here it is a thought that can only be thought in its fullness, self-saturated thought. This thought of absolutely saturated being exhibits itself of its own accord and it cannot be abstracted from. It is the revelatory thought of absolute mediation which no longer falls under the law of what is finitely mediated, so it does not admit mediation and manifestation. The concept of God in the ontological

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8 Cf. especially Hegels *Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*—Lectures on the proofs of God's existence, of 1829 (TW 17, 345–535), which he himself prepared for publication, but also the many discussions of the ontological argument throughout the lectures.

argument is “the *pure concept . . . , that is real due to itself*” (TW 17, 205). It is the concept of the great framework of being and its logical nature, of the immediate and its absolute transparency, the concept of the *in itself already true*, real *knowing*, which even finite knowing ‘inherently’ cannot afford to ignore. It is the concept of the *aseity*, of the self-sustaining selfness of the logos, which no-one can enter into other than through the logos. When Christianity says “that God revealed himself”, indeed that God is “precisely this”, “to reveal himself”, then what we have is essentially a circle, “what is revealed is . . . exactly this, that God is the revealed one” (TW 17, 534). All other content of revelation, such as the theological teaching of the creation, of the incarnation of God and of the finite orientation to a kingdom of God, is, correctly understood, only a *means* to interpret this one statement in the minutest detail, the statement that God is self-mediation and self-communication, that he is the revealed God. From these remarks on the “*only . . . true*” (TW 17, 529) ontological proof of God’s existence, it is clear that Hegel’s theology is not derived from a *deus absconditus*, from (as again Schelling shows signs of) a hidden God, from a dark will or *Ungrund*, as Jacob Böhme termed his mysterious original abyss. Hegel’s God is not felt nor vaguely sensed, nor a “ghost” (TW 16, 43) behind the thickets and forests of finitude; instead he stands clearly in the context of knowledge. Nor is this God transcendent in the sense of a *finite* philosophy of transcendence, he is not the “infinite” immediately *opposed* to the finite, not the “wholly other” immediately opposed to the secretive first *one* fixed in static difference, instead he is *inherently transcendent*, the truly infinite, the true self, the complete totality grasped in thought as person and subject.

The object of religion is “total” and as such an *object* that relates to the *whole* person. Absolute spirit is not only given for particular regions of subjective spirit, not only for thinking or reflection, it is *also* given in feeling. Having religion is not simply about having a particular world view; it means far more than that. It means being immediately embraced by spirit and elevated by it into a special position with respect to the things. Absolute spirit always relates to the individuality of the person too and is in this sense also “affective”. Indeed, absolute spirit would be precisely *not* absolute, *not* inherently manifest, if it excluded “feeling individuality”, or did not at least open itself to that. Thus Hegel acknowledges an “existential” significance to religion even as he locates the *truth* of religion in thought and not in feeling. Modern developments in Christianity, first and foremost Protestantism, have reformulated the coordinates of the practice of theology to a great extent in emotional terms thereby circumventing “objective religion” (as Hegel would have said in his younger days). The new danger which then arose was the psychological concept of religion, the reduction of religious knowledge to a “product of subjective

contingent being" (TW 16, 131), which "man" still "has in common with the animals" (TW 16, 129). Schleiermacher, Hegel's Berlin colleague in the theological faculty, famously attempted to rescue religion from Kant's critical philosophy by anchoring it anthropologically in a "feeling of utter dependence".<sup>9</sup> Against this Hegel asserts that God is "essentially in thought" as indeed "only man has religion, not the animals" (ibid.). In feeling as the relation to God lies "only" the immediate knowledge of consciousness, which by itself can hardly be the guarantee and origin of the totality of life and truth, for it is external to this totality. The totality is known as absolute spirit or at least imagined as such; consciousness "feels" its inadequacy here as its privation while still referring to it. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* demonstrated that this privation also lies in the form of consciousness as such.

Religion as a whole is for Hegel an answer to the problem of the "division of consciousness", the search for the real totality in the reconciliation of opposites and this it has in common with philosophy. Its content is the overcoming of the immediate difference and consequent reduction of the "dual" form of consciousness to a moment of that conscious dynamism of mind and spirit that anticipates the whole. In its own way religion is "the *self-overcoming of the terms of the opposition*, regarded by *reflection* as so *obstinately persistent*", it is the "negation of the negation" (TW 16, 196) and that as the qualitative being or presence of absolute spirit, itself known and acknowledged as manifestation, within the fragmentation of appearances. So it is not completely devoid of "eschatology", of knowledge of a final goal and its realisation. This final goal is self-affirmative, pure revelation and the freedom arising from it and remaining within it. As "inherent knowing", man is "designed" in orientation to this goal. Hegel says that religion is to man "essential and is a feeling that is not alien to him" (TW 16, 15). It is the same path from in-itself to for-us that both religion and philosophy in their respective manners traverse. If the goal of religion is "to become free within it", if "the subject" in religion is the "essential goal", then "this subjectivity is *self-like* (not selfish, not self-obsessed) . . . and is precisely the principle of knowing itself" (TW 16, 26); and if on the other hand philosophy is "knowledge of what is eternal, of what God is and what flows from his nature", then, as a well-know Hegelian phrase has it, "philosophy is . . . in fact itself a mass" (TW 16, 28)—this religious service, it has to be said, is conducted not on the basis of "authority" and "faith" but of "thought", which thus gives it

9 F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*—The Christian faith presented in context according to the principles of the Lutheran church, ed. M. Redeker, Berlin 1960, § 4.

the possibility not available to the simple image of authority, the possibility “of legitimating” the “content” of religion.<sup>10</sup>

The service that philosophy can offer religion here is in the first instance one of a hermeneutic of the concepts responsible for its content, which means first a critique and refutation of concepts inadequate to that content and only then developing the conceptual formulation of true religious content. It is no objection to Hegel’s concordance thesis that right from the start, from Xenophanes and Plato onwards philosophy has been, among other things, a critique of religion, as little as conversely is it a defect of the “Christian church” that it has “its philosophical education to thank” for “the first beginnings” of its doctrinal concepts (TW 16, 29). Philosophy has always turned critically on all attempts to fix religious content in the categories of finitude and to offer as the central content of the truth of faith the mere “reasoning of the understanding” and “particular opinion” (TW 16, 38). Theology may insist that it does not indulge in philosophical theses, but the fact that theology thinks at all implies that it does also apply a *determinate* thinking, even a determinate, if unreflected, metaphysics. Hegel brings these considerations to bear in various forms against the thinking of the understanding, above all against “enlightened” biblical exegesis and the historical explanation of dogma. Throughout his philosophy of religion then, Hegel shows himself to be thoroughly opposed to the dominant theological tendencies of his time, not only with his demand for a “restoration of church doctrine that has been reduced to a minimum by the understanding” (TW 16, 40). To the theologian Friedrich August Tholuck (1799–1877), who was a colleague in Berlin for a few years, Hegel once wrote that in matters relating to the “fundamental doctrine” of Christianity (by which he means above all the doctrine of the trinity), he will not be “passed off with external historical modes of explanation”; it is for him an “abomination . . . to see how such things are explained in the manner of for instance the origin and spread of silk cultivation, of plums, of the pox etc.”<sup>11</sup> The theologian working in terms of historical and rationalistic analysis takes religious documents or dogma for a manifestation of the human imagination or thought and tries to delineate their *external* genesis instead of their “*absolute mode of emergence* from out of the depths of the spirit” (TW 16, 48). Philosophy of religion on the other hand reads both as mediations of the presence of absolute spirit, as documents of the absolute revelation of spirit in which it is not that individual human beings “imagine something”, but in which God is to be thought of as “only imagining himself”

10 Hegel, *Berliner Antrittsrede*—Inaugural address, in: *Berliner Schriften (1818–1831)*, p. 55. Once again not in Dickey and Nisbet’s translation.

11 Hegel, *Briefe*—Letters IV/2, 61.

(TW 16, 33) and thus precisely as self-imagining, i.e. as revelation. The philosophy of religion promotes the awakening of consciousness to the speculative truth of religion, which is positive, if not merely empirical, truth. In complete contrast, the problem of positive religion is its susceptibility to being driven down the lines of finite self-positivising and hurtling headlong on that path all the way to the complete loss “of the knowledge of God” (TW 16, 48).

For Hegel the speculative truth of religion, once again, does not exclude an instantiation in individual consciousness, but includes it. This is why religion refers to an “immediate knowledge” which it trusts each person to have. This position, mutated into philosophy, is what we encounter in Jacobi, and as respectful as Hegel’s assessment of Jacobi always was despite all the criticism, so he is just as respectful of the standpoint of immediacy in relation to the philosophy of religion as one that “must have a rational interest” (TW 16, 49). The “interest” here is that this standpoint includes the conviction of being in one’s own consciousness immediate to God, or “that the religious content announces itself *in the spirit itself*; that the spirit manifests in the spirit, and indeed *in this my spirit*” (TW 16, 50). Religious consciousness disposes in fact over the certainty, which is anything but trivial, of being able at any time by its own effort of thought to be immediate to God and to be with him or, as often appeared in the dogmatics of the nineteenth century, to be able to enter “into communion” with him. The faithful have this certainty without question and it is appropriate for Hegel to the nature of God as spirit, which means not to be a thing separated from other things, but simply “*to be for the spirit*” (TW 16, 52). Nevertheless, this immediate knowledge as such is one-sided and this one-sidedness must be overcome by mobilising the determinate content of religion in its entire extension. In this it is also important that this content be “spirit in the community” (cf. TW 16, 53), that it become a “congregation”, thus acquiring external, observable form and presence. Hegel, the philosopher of spirit, in contrast to his critic Kierkegaard for instance, never lost sight of this “communal spirit” as a vital component of religion, which should be kept in mind when he turns out to be less clear than the Dane on the danger of “collective spirits” anointing themselves even though the content of their spirituality cannot justify their claims. At any rate, for Hegel the demand of a communal “externalisation”, of an objectivation of religious knowledge is one of the persistent characteristics distinguishing religion from philosophy. It is this exteriority that corresponds to the absolute spirit in the religious concept of an objective transcendence and places religion between the “subjective transcendence” of the practice of art and the “absolute transcendence”, transcendence itself transcendent, of the philosophically grasped absolute content (of absolute negativity). Religion exists in the medium of the imagination, but that is

essentially the form of the communal spirit, of objective imagination. It is the “universal” service, as it is also the universal dogma that claims to be binding; its universal “form index” is objective spirit, in whose form here absolute spirit is “external”.<sup>12</sup>

The general division of Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, which will not surprise us by now, is the schema of the logic of the concept, i.e. universality, particularity and concrete individuality, or also (according to the Jena triad) that of concept, realisation and totality of the matter. The account of the *universal concept* of religion is followed by that of religion in its determination, its particularity, the *history of religion*; the conclusion is the totality of the whole sphere, comprising the concept as well as the history of religion, which is the content of *absolute religion*. Religion in its concept comprises three moments, which have to be dealt with separately. God himself constitutes the beginning; then comes the religious relation (for God is spirit and *eo ipso* not only for himself); and finally we have the rituals in which God is known and honoured in the form of an objective, appearing relationship.

God is at first a name in the world of religion and in this form more present to subjective consciousness than to the concept; in a certain sense he always *remains* for religion a name, that is primarily named and called upon and only secondarily is he known. The *philosophy* of religion, in contrast, cannot be satisfied with a *named* truth; its challenge is to know it. The first question here is what is the categorial formulation of the concept of God, according to the logical schema, in which God is known as God? A preliminary version of this formulation can be quickly given if we observe that in the central statements of God, he appears as universally persisting and as “the absolutely independent being”. The theological statement we have already encountered that God is the creator of the world denies any “being arising out of itself” to all visible being, granting it only a “loaned being” (TW 16, 93) pointing beyond itself to the concept of God. God is in this most general sense initially *substance*, and in fact *absolute* substance, grounded purely in itself and consisting only of itself. One cannot really say “God” and at the same time think of something that would be more being than him; for even what is more being would then be God. The

12 This is why Hegel—against the spirit of his age—did not criticise the fact that “in Augsburg they also enunciated a credo”, which gave objective form to the Reformation against Catholicism, cf. Hegel, *Rede zur dritten Säkularfeier der Augsbургischen Konfession*—Address on the third secular celebration of the Augsburg confession, in *Berliner Schriften* (1818–1831), p. 434. In fact the objective doctrinal concepts maintain the claim of religion to be not simply opinion, but the gateway to that truth to which philosophy is also committed.

religions have taught men in the most diverse ways to ask the question as to the *true* substance. In this way they have also taught human beings how to think, for the “one” and “*universal*” (TW 16, 95), as God is known, are only truly accessible on the ground of thought and not through the senses or perception. Religion (tautologically) only becomes explicit *with the thought* of human beings, only with the *difference* between consciousness and God and it is in this religious relation that subjectivity approaches the absolute content, by distinguishing itself from him. Religion always starts with subjectivity making the judgment that it is *not* the absolute. Subjectivity finds in this way that the true absolute is no external immediate, but an immediate that is both external *and* internal, one that is self-showing, i.e. spiritual; an “inaccessible” God who is not revealed would certainly not be the absolute. Precisely this is the content of the “immediate knowledge” of religion and this content means that it does not lie “outside the realm of thought” (TW 16, 121). Even the “religious feelings” have an intelligible, spiritual meaning. The world of religious feelings, the world of regret and fear, but also of gratitude, love and bliss (cf. TW 16, 127), does not have the character of ephemeral variation, but bears within itself the stimulus to unconditionality, the relation to the absolute. Religious feelings do not simply originate in the human psyche, they arise from the encounter with the “tremendous object” (TW 16, 146), with the object that is not encountered everyday. Then again religious feeling claims to be far more concrete than any immediately subjective form. In the religion of art, in fact in all art animated by religion, it becomes *intuition*. Then, especially in the religion reflecting its concept as well as its history, religious feeling becomes intelligible *imagination*, a liberated spirituality, and here religion enters into the arena of *competing* images thus experiencing itself as something particular. Religious consciousness may find satisfaction in its determinate particularity; but the ground beneath it is eroding fast and its subjective satisfaction is not adequate to the *object*, which has to be what it is all about in religion. This implies that thinking here, although still substantially bound to the imagination, has yet to liberate itself, but it must do that in order *to become itself*, passing through the “dialectic of the imagination” and regaining its relation to the totality to which it belongs on the level of the concept. Religious thinking is no longer merely the archiving of pictures and images, but the “*movement in itself*, better the *elevation* to God”, it is “this *transition* from one content to another, from finite content to absolute, infinite content” (TW 16, 161). Hegel rescues here for religion a *syntactic and synthetic* competence which allows it to see all things (and religion is always concerned with *all* things) in a specific light, in the light of the spirit attesting to itself, which in its truth is precisely never something imposed upon people from without, nor something to be fought over tooth

and nail, but much more something interior to the human spirit, something revealed and taking spirit along with it into its movement. *Thinking* religious consciousness knows that it knows in the same way it is known (cf. in the Bible, 1. Corinthians 13, 12), or that it itself is only the thought of absolute knowing, the thought of God.<sup>13</sup> The speculative concept of religion acknowledges this reduction of thought to a moment within religion through the totality, that is by overcoming finite consciousness into absolute spirit; it recognises that “religion” is the implemented “relation of spirit to the absolute spirit” and only in this way is spirit “*as the knowing one, the known one*”, but then this in such a way that “the absolute spirit itself . . . [is] . . . the self-referential one” (TW 16, 197) and as such the very power of relating. For this speculative concept of religion Hegel referred to Meister Eckhart (cf. TW 16, 209) among others and indeed there are several moves in mysticism, but also in Nicholas of Cusa, that are comparable to the absolute-reflexive grounding of religious knowledge in Hegel’s philosophy. However that may be, the real kernel of religion, whatever its historical accompaniments may have been, lies for Hegel in the demonstrated “self-surrender” of finite thinking and imagining to a divine rhythm of knowing and of the life of knowing in totality. It lies in the absolute unification and in the truly infinite relation, which religion knows and celebrates in symbolic and intellectual terms in the here and now. Only from this and not from finite relations of utility or advantage is the *historically objective power* of religion to be understood. Its motor is precisely not to be found in the particular thinking and imagination of arbitrary individuals nor in “founders of religions”. The centre of religion is, once again, the self-presentation of the absolute into the midst of existence. The active manner of this existence of the absolute in appearance is the *religious community*.

The religious community, the congregation, is the appearing of the absolute content of religion in time and among people; it is how the absolute spirit “becomes practical” objectively materialising itself in determination and action and in this form it approaches the individual from outside. Hegel, perhaps surprisingly, calls the first moment of the religious community *faith*. This also means that “faith” in its religious meaning is initially *knowledge mediated by the community* or the *self-consciousness of the community*, that it is “institutional knowledge”, that its subject is primarily not the single individual, but

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13 Cf. on this Hegel’s *Rezension von K. Fr. Göschels Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen im Verhältnisse zur christlichen Glaubenserkenntnis*—Review of K.Fr. Göschel’s aphorisms on ignorance and absolute knowledge in relation to the Christian declaration of faith (TW 11, 353–389), esp. pp. 368 ff.

the objective spirit and within that the “congregation”. If the credo is a central component of the Christian congregation, then this shows that it is not just an arbitrary set of opinions, but a ‘trans-subjective’ certainty that claims to represent the history and the concept of what is spiritual in a binding way. The individual is not as it were invited to experience some new poetry, but solely invited to harmonise with the rhythms which have already taken hold and in that to shed the darkness of his own personal views. Still faith is *also* essentially how the spiritual is for me, it is the ‘*me*-diation’, the arrival of religious feeling in myself, by me. For Hegel one of the central themes of the Reformation is that faith always reaches into the free centre of the person. It does that first in the sense that it is the individual himself or herself who participates in religious consciousness making it possible to eliminate the finitude and immediacy of consciousness. It does it also in the other sense that the individual is the one who calls upon subjectivity, who calls it into action, into the activity of individuality. This is why the opposition between faith and free comprehension can arise here, in which religious ‘bound’ knowledge appears as compulsion imposed upon the individual, against which then a *formal* freedom of belief has to be asserted. Again it is the philosophy of religion that Hegel sees as offering mediation, especially by presenting the faith held in ‘refined’ form. It is a refined faith in that it no longer has any “arbitrary content” (TW 16, 210) and now means a relation that is absolute and spiritual, while also giving linguistic expression to the context of actual faith and the “freedom of man” that excludes all external observance (cf. TW 16, 218 f.). If religion is free “automotion, self-movement” in the concept, then finite images of thought can hardly be taken for objects of faith. But then finitudes and “encrustations” can always happen in the subject; especially in a subject which prefers to remove itself from the motion of the concept struggling against the other elements of the community, like sacrifice and the elevation beyond everyday life in “ceremonial”. This is the point where religion acquires a relation to ethical life that consists not directly in preaching moral *imperatives*, but in promoting the integration of life, as in the real meaning of the congregation as such, calling upon the institutions of objective spirit to participate in an ‘integral’, not narrow-minded life generated by spirit itself.

Perhaps this is enough to explain why Hegel goes on immediately following the chapter on the congregation to discuss the relation between religion and the state (cf. TW 16, 236–246). “The people that has a bad concept of God also has a bad state” (TW 16, 237), says Hegel, referring not to a civil religion introduced for reasons of state but to the preconditions in religious objectifications for the formation of the state in the realm of objective spirit, for

“civil freedom and justice can only be the fruit of the freedom found in God”.<sup>14</sup> It is the absolute spirit that carries and forms the objective spirit, in silence, to be sure, behind the backs of historically active consciousness, certainly not as a theocracy, which would betray the fundamental impulse of absolute spirit, nor without effects of world historical significance.

The section on determinate religion, which contains Hegel’s history of religion, also has much to say on the relations between religion and the emergence of the state and culture. Among its conclusions is the fact that Rome’s Caesar cult is tied to a concept of the state not compatible with one that corresponds to the Jewish religion; also the consciousness bound to natural religion, from whose standpoint the animal can still seem superior to man, is not capable by itself of developing principles of constitutional law, which takes its starting point from the recognition of a concept of the dignity of man founded in the freedom of the subject. Hegel recognises even here a teleology of the revelation of freedom, of the acceptance of a self-sustaining, autonomous religious standpoint which ultimately no longer has its premises in one or another given fact, but only in God’s own “giving of himself”. This is the standpoint of the absolute (because revealed) religion, which is no longer a determinate religion, but the idea of religion that has become concrete. In a certain sense the history of religion describes only the forecourt through which the spirit passes on its way to the normative goal of absolute religion, i.e. Christianity. This history offers two “fundamental types” of religious conviction. One is the “nature religion” in which the *spiritual* is taken to be what is *natural* and both are taken as a unity; the other is the “religion of spiritual individuality” in which the spiritual and the subjective raise themselves *against* and above the natural and reach their own genuine *freedom*. Only on this level does a strictly *ethically* oriented religion like that of the Jews become possible, which is also true for what is ultimately a *utilitarian* concept of religion like that of the Romans.

Nature religion begins with simple magic as the expression of a self-consciousness in thrall to the things while also seeking to become lord over the external world. This leads through Chinese naturally bound “metaphysics” and Indian “fantasy” ultimately to forms in which traces of the liberation from the object and the attainment of an ethical interpretation can be found—above all in the religion of the Parsi and that of the Egyptian “religion of the riddle”, which makes of the external world a kind of hieroglyph with a meaning that refuses to come out of the beyond. In contrast, the religion of spiritual individuality begins with Judaism in the spirit of the “sublimity” of God against

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14 Hegel, *Rede zur dritten Säkularfeier der Augsburgerischen Konfession*, in *ibid.* p. 440.

the world, achieving concrete form in the “beautiful” incarnation of the god of the art religion of the Greeks and vanishing ultimately under the Romans into everyday life and its inflated religious demands, where “now the god is served *for a purpose*, and this purpose is a *human one*” (TW 17, 173). This contraction of the religious aspect is accompanied by the proliferation of arbitrary power in human relations; the Roman circus is the proof of the “worthlessness of the individual” (TW 17, 177), while at the same time the emperor, himself an arbitrary individual, claims divine honours.

As we have said, Hegel championed the “restoration of church doctrine” against the thinking of the understanding in general, but he insisted that this was needed within theology too, which he considered to be the *logical* language of God. The two central dogmas that concern him here are the *trinity* and the *incarnation*, the claim that God became a man. The centrality of these dogmas for Hegel arises immediately from the fact that they are the doctrines in which the living revelation of God is expressed. God is neither he who is hidden in nature nor he who is removed from the world in his sublime individuality; God is rather the truth that communicates itself, the hinge of all spiritual presence and as such ultimate fulfilment. One can understand the history of religion as the search for the absolute relation to the absolute. Philosophical critique of particular religions is initially always the proof that a particular manner of bringing the absolute into the present or of thinking of it in this particular way is not absolute at all. The Christian concept of the revealed God is the concept of the *absolute that shows itself only from out of itself* and it is the two named dogmas of the trinity and the incarnation which are responsible for rendering this self-showing present. We have seen earlier that transparency, i.e. having been opened up, or the openness in its apparent “self-evidence” was a problem that Hegel returned to again and again. In the “revealed” religion the clarity that is solely grounded in itself is the centre of the faith. Here we have the knowledge that God is this living clarity and that he does not wish to exclude man from his clarity. Thus the doctrine of incarnation justifies the religious relation in a movement in which God proves himself to be concrete self-consciousness and represents himself as such. The doctrine of the trinity stakes out the framework in which this self-opening comes to stand between selfhood and complete self-communication. The trinity says that God *as spirit is through spirit for spirit*, that the spiritual community is generated from spirit and from nothing else and seeks to perfect itself into a realm of the presence of spirit.

The effect back on human relations that this concept of religion must have is above all that *in principle* the objective resistance against the power of the concept vanishes. “The absolute religion is thus the religion of *truth and freedom*” (TW 17, 203); it is the religion to which the movement of knowing, far

from being alien to it, lies at its very essence; absolute religion takes consciousness out of the serfdom to what is thing-like and reconciles it in its worldly existence with its own origin. This is the point in which religion as the consciousness of freedom and philosophy can meet in the matter itself, but it is also the point behind which religion may not retreat if it is not to miss its telos and succumb to the critique of religion.

### 3      Revealed Religion as Absolute Religion

Hegel structures his account of the absolute religion, Christianity, under the three persons of the trinity, distinguishing between a “realm of the father”, that of “the son” and one of “the spirit”. The “realm of the father” develops the *concept* of God as such, “as it were before and apart from the creation of the world” (TW 17, 218); it contains the “logical” idea of God, not the concrete, living concept of God as he is immediately for religious consciousness. But then even in this realm God is not an empty abstraction or a simple *one* that would be inherently unutterable. God is much more—as Hegel says totally in line with the tradition of philosophical theology since Aristotle—God is pure “thinking” as “pure pulsation within itself” (TW 17, 220), the reflexive relation as a purely knowing relation to itself that sets the difference and immediately overcomes it, absolute self-affirmation. Theology speaks of the eternal God “before time”, of an “immanent trinity”, which Hegel here for his part takes as an expression of the “processual” selfness of God, his infinite mediating and differentiation. He praises Jakob Böhme because he wanted “to know” the trinitarian form of selfness “*in everything everywhere*” (TW 17, 240). Böhme had found a tool (even if a rough one) to break through the static nature of the finite world with the living act of “weaving” spirit into it. Augustine in a sense attempted the same thing with his doctrine of the “*vestigia trinitatis*”, the traces of the trinity in creation.

The “realm of the son” then goes beyond the logical or “immanent” level to an “economical” trinity or one in the “history of salvation”. The second person of the trinity is in this sense not only inner moment of the godhead, but a real principle of a liberated otherness and of finitude as the principle of *God’s other*, of the creation. Hegel transforms the Christian teaching of the son’s role as “go-between of the creation” into what is effectively the first act of the incarnation and as such nothing other than the absolute re-integration of the difference. The “second act” is then the appearance of God as man (θεάνθρωπος, *theanthropos*), Christ himself in the world and for religious consciousness, which as the consciousness of God and as reconciliation is the content of Christ’s teaching. The culmination point in this movement of alienation is the death of Christ,

the immediate point being the death of God, which is his complete downfall into difference. "God has died, God is dead—this is the most awful thought, that everything eternal, everything true is no more, that the *negation is itself in God*; the highest pain, the feeling of the complete impossibility of any rescue, the abandonment of everything higher is tied in with this" (TW 17, 291). Indeed, the notion of the death of God is more than that of an arbitrary nothing. It is the collapse of the logical and of the spiritual and this is what makes it self-destructive for religious consciousness; but then this consciousness responds by taking the idea of *total* (self-)otherness into itself, it takes it up as its own entry into the process of the God who reveals himself through his death and beyond it—it takes it up in such a way that it can emerge from it receiving itself anew. For the death of God on the cross is the death of death; it shows God himself to be the force behind even this relation to the null-point and as such the one who is the absolute power of relation. Death does not suspend the process of divine revelation, as little as it is capable of erasing the divine life; it becomes the point of transition to an absolute relation and in that way actually immanent to this relation and to life; death is itself overcome by life. Thus the death of God takes on the significance of a "reversal", "God is resurrected and returns to life", even if it is true that this life, like the glorification of Christ, is revealed only to "faith" (ibid.) as the anticipation of the divine totality. God's self-differentiation contains the transfiguration of his other as his own inner telos, and precisely for that reason the death of Christ is the beginning of a transfigured life and also of religious consciousness that experiences itself anew as the power over the finite. The story of Jesus Christ is "the absolute history of the divine idea" (TW 17, 293) on which a *completely* realised consciousness of freedom can be grounded, a consciousness also of freedom from guilt, from death and from time, all of which vanish in the participation in the eternal and the "divine process" that is yet manifest in time.

This process appears in time as the life of the congregation, that is of the "subjects, who are in the spirit of God" (TW 17, 306). It is now the "realm of the spirit" where the idea continuously realises itself and as it were passes into flesh and blood—only that here these do not count *as* flesh and blood, but as the location of "unification of the infinite opposition", the union of human and divine nature that grasps the individual in his or her individuality and recognises him or her as "called to bliss" (TW 17, 305). The congregation is a product of the spirit, arising first after "the sensuous, immediate presence" of Christ "has ended" (TW 17, 308), and it arises essentially from the witness of the spirit, not from sensuous evidence scrutinized and confirmed by the understanding; such evidence must always remain ambiguous. Thus Hegel criticises the belief in miracles too as a supposedly necessary ingredient of the religious

standpoint insisting that “the *spirit*” itself “is the miracle, this *absolute intervention*” in “the course and the eternal laws of nature” (TW 17, 316) and that within it the natural order of things is turned on its head. Thus the Roman world did not withstand the new concept of the infinite value of the subject in which man is born for the second time from the spirit. It is precisely this spiritual birth, this “objective” positioning of man on the ground of freedom that is the continuing effect of the church (cf. TW 17, 323 f.). The actuality of the church or the congregation is the doctrine and the life of reconciliation, the acceptance and integration of the subject into the divine process itself and its goal is in this way ultimately the “presence of God” (TW 17, 327), to be experienced in the present in the sacrament with an added perspective in which its “eternal determination” appears “simultaneously as a *future*” (TW 17, 303). In this the congregation stands in opposition to the world understood as the complex aggregation of unreconciled existence devoid of totality. In fact, the absolute religion’s immanent principle of concretion allows this opposition to be regarded not only in polemical terms. The “true subaction of the worldliness of the world” (TW 17, 332), “reworking” the world from the religious standpoint, lies in the production of ethical life, in the will to find the objectively spiritual existence of freedom in a political state that is based on the principle of reason or of right. Here the ideal ‘surplus’ remaining for religion can turn into the development of a formal subjectivity that is ultimately sufficient to itself and robbed of all content. Hegel, who sees the specific danger of his own time as lying precisely in this direction, speaks of the threatening “standpoint devoid of content . . . in which no kind of religion would be possible”, for “the idea existing in and for itself must be asserted in religion by itself and not by me” (TW 16, 185). One can only speak of religion when it is a question not of doing it oneself, but of the *objective* self-activity of the spirit in its community. This is why it is not the least task of the philosophy of religion to refer religion to its own content, reminding us of this in its whole force and power. Religion must take heed of what holds generally in philosophy.

The concept *produces* . . . the truth—that is subjective freedom—while *recognising* that this content is simultaneously something that is not produced, but is truth existing in and for itself” (TW 17, 339).

In other words religion has taught man how to think with the absolute object and as absolute religion it has realised the reconciliation of man with that absolute object. It has generated autonomy *for us* with what is *in itself* autonomous, but then what is autonomous here too has its own law and is not simply an abstract negation of external necessity. The religion interpreting itself as

negative freedom stands in danger of losing its object and with that of losing itself. The secret of religion is that totality and the individual subject relate to each other as recognising each other and as such overcome into this recognition. The religion that remains with the matter recognises this situation symbolically, in ritual, in ethical life exhibiting in that once again a structural affinity to right, whose actuality also consists in recognition and its act of knowledge is also in fact 'symbolical' and not really scientific. Philosophy on the other hand knows all this from the concept.

According to Hegel's division the "justification" of religion "by thinking consciousness" (TW 17, 341) is the last stage of the realisation of the "realm of the spirit". Hegel is quite well aware that this "justification" cannot be "*universal*" in the sense of a knowledge extending in all directions; this latter is reserved to the "level" of "philosophy" (TW 17, 342). One can indeed ask whether the kind of *thinking* acquisition of religion Hegel promotes in his *Philosophy of Religion* is not always on the final level—an acquisition from which a genuinely *religious* (imaginative) propagation of religion can no longer issue. 'Hermeneutical' exposures—and as we emphasised at the start of this chapter, Hegel's philosophy of religion is also a hermeneutics of religion—are as a rule the most comical executions that a body of doctrinal learning can suffer. In that sense the divergent interpretations provoked by Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion* were really all available within it. Hegel himself spoke of a "possession of truth" (TW 17, 344), which *materialiter* certainly includes and must sustain the philosophy of religion. The philosophy of religion does not resolve the antagonisms of the times, nor does it resolve every actual conflict of religious consciousness within it. For Hegel philosophy of religion is *itself* a form of religious consciousness and knows itself to exist in a public space, in a space of manifestation, which itself is not only prior to all hermeneutics, as a location of absolute understanding it is the first principle not only of religion, but also of philosophy.

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## Philosophy in Its Concept and History

To define philosophy in non-philosophical language is strictly speaking impossible. Precisely because philosophy is the reflexive acquisition of meaning and self-understanding, such definitions are themselves no more than philosophical claims. Hegel understood philosophy as its own result, as the goal of its own *motion*, which must be present already in its first beginnings. Philosophy in this sense is the whole span from the first inkling of the need for mediation all the way to its satisfaction in self-sustaining knowledge that is presuppositionless because it overcomes and encompasses its own assumptions into its own rhythms. It is the whole circle from the first consciousness of the productive difference up to its closure in the *now* of knowing, in the presence of totality. Whoever wishes to know what philosophy is can only be referred to its whole system and not to a guidebook formula. Again there is no formula for that system, which means that interested parties cannot be non-participating observers, for *they themselves* will be affected directly by this matter about which they are asking. Nor does the system of philosophy sway in the air above people's heads; it is the explicitly stated concept of man as a rationally willing being endowed with cognition. Philosophy is the self-knowledge of that impulse to know and to act that we find ourselves to be—but then certainly such that this self-knowledge must prove itself in the greatest possible range, which is its only source of truth.

### 1 Three Syllogisms

Hegel concluded his *Encyclopaedia* with seven paragraphs that define philosophy itself. In § 574 we read, the “concept of philosophy is *the idea thinking itself*, the truth that knows; it is what is logical in the sense that it is the universal *tested and proven* in concrete content as in its actuality”. Philosophy is thus cognition returning to itself from out of entanglement with the objects. Indeed, it is knowing returning to itself from out of the whole range of content, it is the *proven* knowledge, i.e. having exposed itself to the object and having fulfilled itself therein, and as such is the *solid* knowledge of objective knowledge. It is important to note that Hegel only recognises as philosophy that which has withstood the testing in what is actual and which has its penetration of the actual behind it—important also for the concept of idealism, which

thus precisely cannot mean the formal sketch, the mere construction of what has already been thought out and thought through. Proving philosophy here is essentially the proving of the impulse to freedom that is neither refracted through any residual objective relation nor distracted by others. We started from the assumption that freedom is a key word of fundamental importance in Hegel's philosophy; the 'end', the goal and the purpose of this philosophy can only be reached through free knowledge and the knowledge that knows itself to be free. Objective relations are not denied here, they are just reduced to *functions* of freedom. Or, which amounts to the same thing, they are vindicated before spirit and transformed into modes of presence of mind, presence of spirit; from 'objective' relations they have been turned into *reflexive* relations and only as such are they known. The "terrors of the objective world" have given way to a free relation to the world and a freedom within it; a freedom whose real standard-bearer is the rational science we call philosophy. Absolute knowledge (absolute knowing that is immediate to itself), absolute idea (the unfolding of this cognition to the absolute form that knows itself, to the method sustaining knowing) and absolute spirit (the 'saturated' self-consciousness of knowing as absolute actuality) are here no formal postulates. Philosophy as the self-consciousness of qualified freedom is its concrete existence.

The *Encyclopaedia* presents philosophy as such in a systematic and logical form closed in itself, summarised in three syllogisms, which together form a "syllogism of syllogisms" and in that crystallise the contours of the system. We can call upon the theory of the syllogism in the *Science of Logic* for an initial approach to this concept of philosophy. The premisses of one syllogism figure had to be overcome or proved by its successor figures until all the premisses were mediated and the whole could present itself as a closed circle. With some minor deviations the syllogism figures developed in the *Science of Logic* can be taken as the basic patterns for the final form of philosophy given at the end of the *Encyclopaedia*. Hegel's last three syllogisms consist of three 'terms' corresponding to the parts of the system, thus we have the terms *logic*, *nature* and *spirit*. In this order they form the first philosophical syllogism, that of a thinking which takes *logic* as premiss and generates the concept of *spirit* from *nature*, thus filling thinking and recognising its determinate content. The standpoint of metaphysics can be seen in this figure, which through immediate thinking transforms the immediate given into a spiritual actuality.<sup>1</sup> The cosmological proof of God's existence, which deploys rules of thought to derive the existence of God from nature, is an example of this kind of inference. In fact this standpoint only reaches a first *appearance* of the truth, namely an immediacy

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1 Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* § 26.

with logical character, a rational objectivity, but no consciousness of *mediation itself*. The law of form of this thinking is that “of transition, while that of science is the course of necessity”;<sup>2</sup> it is the law of dogmatic thinking which regards the spirit as external and the truth as something lying beyond itself.

The second syllogism takes nature as its first premiss and spirit (mediation) as the second. Logic, subjective knowing or the form of mediation is now the result and the whole movement is an appearance of reflection asserting itself to be immediately free and independent of nature.<sup>3</sup> Scepticism is a good example of a style of thinking that starts with an immediate opposition between nature and mediation with the focus on the latter, but the critical philosophy of Kant also falls under this heading; in both cases the single, isolated spirited mind, the “I think”, is the midpoint of a knowledge that sometimes emphasises its negativity and sometimes is fulfilled, but is always subjective.

Only the third syllogism is the disjunction of truth, or the idea itself, into spirit and nature, the former as its *subjective* side and the latter as the “process of the *in itself*, objective, existing idea”.<sup>4</sup> Subject and substance are now “manifestations” of one and the same “reason knowing itself” and so “the nature of the matter, the concept” is “the activity of knowing, the eternal idea existing in and for itself . . . as absolute spirit”.<sup>5</sup> The appropriate example here is *speculation*, i.e. Hegel’s philosophy itself, which throughout the objective and subjective forms of the first two syllogisms knows pure knowing, existing cognition, i.e. self-knowing, to be the absolute power of relating. The syllogism expresses the logical relations between the three moments of the concept: universal (U), particular (P) and individual (I). The three syllogisms give the following schema.

- I    Logic (U)—nature (P)—spirit (I)  
      (external appearance of truth, philosophy of substance)
- II    Nature (P)—spirit (I)—logic (U)  
      (internal appearance of truth, philosophy of subject)
- III   Spirit (I)—logic (U)—nature (I)  
      (self-disjunction of truth into subject and substance, philosophy of  
      the free self)

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. § 575.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. § 576.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. § 577.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

This schema can clearly be regarded as a formalism, but it is one that only really means anything together with the content, with the actualised system of philosophy. In that case it would say something about the acquisition of this system, which is immediately only the first syllogism and to that extent still has the second—its conversion into thought—before it. But then this ‘conversion into thought’, the actualisation, for instance of the Hegelian philosophy, is not really the goal of philosophy. Its *terminus ad quem* is rather the logical ‘range of responsibility’ of transparency, i.e. reason as such. Its goal is the *free* existence of mind and spirit, being in the highest potency, the absolute potency of relating.

## 2 History of Philosophy as Developmental Continuum of the Idea

Clearly the schema above suggests other meaningful interpretations besides the one mentioned that do not overrate formalism; a rough outline of the history of philosophy would be one such, for the bound, substantial thinking of the truth is chronologically how philosophy first appears constituted as an ontology in whatever manner, while the enthusiasm for the subjective neatly characterises the standpoint of the modern period, and finally self-knowledge as simultaneously true knowing, as fulfilled idea is Hegel's own programme. In fact Hegel's fundamental premiss, namely that *philosophy is the existing self-consciousness of actual freedom* fundamentally implies the possibility of grasping philosophy *historically*, as a historical existence and Hegel (very different from, say, Fichte) always paid particular attention to this perspective. *Historiam philosophiae*: Hegel first lectured on the history of philosophy in Jena.<sup>6</sup> His first lecture course in Heidelberg was devoted to the subject, and he repeated the course in the second of his two years there.<sup>7</sup> He had just begun his tenth lecture series on the history of philosophy in Berlin when it was abruptly terminated by his untimely death.<sup>8</sup>

Like the concept of philosophy itself, that of its history immediately brings up a problem that is itself philosophical: in what relation can philosophy as the ‘science of truth’ stand to its chronological extension, to the constant variation of philosophical positions and systems. In an aphorism from his Jena notebook Hegel writes that the philosopher has just as immediate a relation to

6 The announcement is in *Briefe*—Letters IV/1, p. 81.

7 Six hours a week in the winter semester of 1816/17 and then five hours a week in winter semester 1817/18, cf. *Briefe*—Letters IV/1, pp. 110 f.

8 Cf. the announcements in the *Index Lectionum* in *Briefe*—Letters IV/1, pp. 114–119.

"Plato, Spinoza etc." as "the farmer's wife" does to "her dead brother or uncle" (GW V, 489); what was thought in the past is not simply over and done with; one might say it has a continuing right of residence in the house of philosophy. Then again the house of philosophy is not a museum; the history of philosophy is not a "storehouse of philosophical opinions" (TW 18, 29) piled up as in an archive. Hegel vehemently opposes the claim that the history of philosophy is anything like the administration of an inheritance and, indeed, that such an administration could have any philosophical interest at all. Hegel rejected turning philosophy into a museum in his very first publication, in the *Difference* essay (TW 2, 15 ff.), where he lays out a whole panorama of different views to which the intellectual relation has been broken, which are no longer of interest or have become completely external, i.e. they hardly seem philosophical any more, although they give no sustenance to the conclusion that the "differences and variations" appearing within it constitute the final refutation of philosophy. The key to the history of philosophy as a history of reason does not lie in its diversity, but in bringing out the relation that takes us further, especially in the conceptual oppositions in which philosophy arises. Philosophy is a science of relations, just as knowing is about coming to oneself within differing, and it is this in relation to its own incarnations, in relation to everything that can stimulate philosophical knowing. It is nonsense to insist on the "differentness of the philosophies" as something "standing, fixed, keeping them apart from each other" (TW 18, 52) and to forget that all differentiation and diversity has its "dialectic" (TW 18, 53) and it is in this dialectic that the *history of philosophy*, as the life of philosophy in the course of different times, lies. In this sense Hegel can say, "We have to make this comprehensible, that this diversity of the many philosophies not only does not damage philosophy itself in any way—the possibility of philosophy—but that it has been and remains simply necessary to the existence of the science of philosophy—that this is essential to it" (TW 18, 37). This "being essential" means that philosophy is only "in the movement of the thinking spirit" and within that as "correlation" (TW 18, 38), that it is the whole "metonymically" called upon in every one of its moments even as each of them remains also a moment opposed to the whole. Just as life comprehends the most opposed interests, impulses and movements, which are only vital together in competing with each other, just so is philosophy not an "abstract" unity, but a living, vital and concrete unity that only goes on living as a determinate unity in the *conflict of the standpoints*. 'Development', the process by which what is in-itself becomes for-itself, what is inherently given becomes autonomously self-sufficient, and 'concretion' are thus the fundamental coordinates of the history of philosophy. Development is also self-exposition in opposition to the other and ultimately the self-preservation of mind and spirit,

while concretion is self-determination in the determinate relation to the other consisting of a “process, and in that, rest” (TW 18, 44). Freedom is both, the power of exposition as well as the capability of acting against the other not with force, but as self-determination recognising the other as a different kind of determinacy. This means that the history of philosophy includes a gradual increase in the intensity of its consciousness of freedom along the axis of its chronological extension (cf. TW 18, 47); from other ways of thinking it draws out the more concrete thinking and knows that it is “one pulse” of thinking still “beating through all parts” (ibid.) even as the parts remain different.

Clearly, the fact that philosophy has a history does not mean that philosophy would arise in varied refractions into external view in a predetermined, presupposed autonomous course, but the fact that philosophy emerges as itself a unity of development reflected into itself implies that philosophical history can only be known from the idea of philosophy itself (cf. TW 18, 53). So it should come as no surprise that a genuine consciousness of the history of philosophy belongs to the later manifestations of the practice of philosophy and that earlier times, such as even the philosophy of the Renaissance and the early modern period, found themselves in an “immediate” relation to even earlier, if not exactly to the “oldest” philosophical positions, to the “mummies”, which by now we regard as “anachronistic” only because we have forgotten the intervening developments (cf. TW 18, 65 f.). Philosophical history thus focuses on the “being... of the spirit” in “its actions” (TW 18, 51), on the life of philosophy itself and is not a collection of its relics; as such we too can recapture the impulse that found expression in such variety in the past antagonisms of this life which is anything but dead. “The acquisitions of thought, built into thought, constitute the being of the mind and the spirit itself... the history of philosophy deals with that which does not age, with what is living here and now” (TW 18, 58). Another way of looking at it is that the history of philosophy, like everything that has to do with freedom, is in its heart about facilitating participation in actual reality; it is about finding instances of what is manifest, not of what is untrue and lost. It is a science of presences and not of what has faded and precisely in this sense it is about clarifying to itself and understanding the “idea” present within it “as that idea has been grasped and represented in the *latest* philosophy” (TW 18, 61). Of course, this does not imply that novelty *per se* would be taken as a criterion here for deciding on the relevance of “acquisitions” in the history of philosophy, because the main requirement has to be that what is new truly deals with the *idea* of philosophy and not any old arbitrary content even if it is true that *qualitative* newness, pure originality, is what really brings out the life of philosophy. “In itself new” is only that which has its beginning by itself not in another, that which brings itself forth purely

from out of itself; “the spirit can satisfy itself only in the knowledge of its own originality” (TW 18, 66) and a thinking that does not reach its own originality is not capable of making judgments about the history of philosophy—at best it can only judge itself.

Once all this is understood, Hegel gives some rules for a ‘hermeneutically’ correct approach to the ‘stuff’ of the history of philosophy. One is the principle that an older philosophy is not to be measured against the results of a newer one, that one thus “has no business looking for any more in the old philosophies than one is justified in expecting to find in them” (TW 18, 60; cf. also TW 20, 510). No-one should expect to find among the Greeks the principle of subjectivity first made possible by Christianity; and to take an example that Hegel does not use, but which serves his purpose too, freedom as the fundamental principle of philosophy that has become conscious of itself first developed by Kant and Fichte should not be looked for in the Medieval period.

Another principle is that the view must be abandoned that philosophy originates in the external ‘influences’ of foreign times or cultures. It is certainly correct to say that here everything hangs together with everything else in certain “contexts”, just as it is also correct that there is no philosophy where life is dominated by the struggle for survival or where there is no “general correlation” between “political freedom” and “freedom of thought” (TW 18, 117). Nevertheless, philosophy would not be free thought if the history of philosophy were not the life of free thinking, if philosophy were merely the “effect” of conditioning “causes”, merely consciousness determined by being. It is not about causalities here, but there is a “unity . . . of these various forms”, for “there is only *one* spirit, manifesting and forming itself in distinct moments” (TW 18, 70). We can even go one step further and say that it is only in philosophy that this encompassing spirit is consciously manifested; only philosophy gives “the concept” of an “epoch”. “It thus does not stand above its time, it is the knowledge of what is substantial in its time” (TW 18, 74)—an application of that ‘simultaneity thesis’ we first encountered in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, of the essential continuing identity or synchronicity of substantial and subjective relations that runs through Hegel’s entire work. The continuation of the last quotation must not be neglected here, for philosophy “in its form” does also “stand above its time”; the determinate utterance of what is now as an “object” (ibid.) distinguishes the spirit from this “now”, making the spirit into its horizon and as such more extensive than what it grasps within it, which means it contains more, including the potential for the future.<sup>9</sup>

9 For this Hegel gave the example, “what Greek philosophy had been became actuality in the Christian world”, TW 18, 75. Greek philosophy is thus not only an “expression” of a particular

A third rule relates to the distinction between philosophy and the finite sciences, which, however much autonomous thinking is to be found in their historical forms, still involve a “lack . . . of content” (TW 18, 81). Thus we do not seek to find philosophy in the highly developed sciences and arts of Mesopotamia and Egypt, at least not in the narrower sense, as little, indeed, as we would seek it in mythology (more because of the form in this case), for here thought has not liberated itself simply to be itself, it is not purely transparent to itself (cf. TW 18, 109).

Finally the history of philosophy may not fall together with the history of religion, which we have already understood from Hegel's concept of religion as a symbolically bound mode of the existence of the absolute. In contrast to the finite sciences, religion does have the content that basically meets the requirements of philosophy, but it has that content not in the “concept” and in the form of “universal terms of thought” (TW 18, 101). Thus the beginning of the history of philosophy can only be found “where the universal is grasped as all-encompassing being or where being is grasped in a universal manner” (the concept of totality, and within that totality the principle too, is grasped that being and thinking are coextensive), “where the thinking of thinking emerges” (where reflexivity, if first in a most general sense of selfness, is conscious) (TW 18, 115 f.). Both formulations relate immediately to the the beginning of the “freedom of self-consciousness”. With the consciousness that “the subject as such persists and remains in the substantial” (TW 18, 121), that it is not an “ephemeral” appearance of the world, but the knowing relation to the world, we also know that it is not a born slave, but that freedom is its destiny and for that reason it is the bearer “of the universal will” and not the born object of despotic “arbitrariness” (TW 18, 122), but the place where freedom originates. All of this only happened in the West, so the beginning of philosophy lies in Greece, where for the first time “the light” became “the lightning strike of thought that broke into the world and there created a world out of itself” (TW 18, 121). It would be superficial to denounce as eurocentrism Hegel's view that the first blossoming of free thought and of the freedom thinking itself happened in the West, for it is a fact that *this* thinking as essentially universal is not anyone's property but is accessible to everyone. The notion that man “is not a slave” (TW 18, 122) rooted in the freedom to grasp the universal, in the freedom of knowledge, is not the product or the principle of any particular cultural sphere, but addresses everyone and indeed is ‘in itself’ already known by everyone. The geographical origin of this notion is irrelevant, the point is that it

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world contemporary with it, but rather still the thought of a future, a “*vaticinium*”, as every genuine philosophy is always a “prophecy” of the spirit as a whole.

constitutes a solid foundation behind which it is no longer possible to retreat. The concept of the 'dignity of man' for instance, today everywhere to be heard and still so often abused, is the concept of a concrete universal that would be rendered abstract if it were confined to one culture or tradition, indeed, in that case it would be suspended. It is external reflection that promotes this suspension. It never reaches the substance of the idea nor its substantial validity.

Hegel's history of philosophy cannot be described or scrutinised in detail here. Following the rhythm that belongs to the identity of the modern period as such, Hegel's division of the field is tripartite into ancient, medieval and modern philosophy, although the emphasis remains on two periods especially, the one following Socrates and the other following Kant. Heroes of ancient thought from the pre-Socratics are discussed in great detail. In contrast the Medieval period, which as in other histories of the nineteenth century includes the Reformation, despite being the second millennium of philosophy and the first implantation of philosophy into the ground of Christianity, is traversed with "seven-league boots" (TW 19, 493). That is not to say that this period did not occasionally produce some luminous insights and had its own substantial aspects. In the Medieval period what was "thought" came into "opposition with the existing universe" (TW 20, 63) and its principle was that of the *alienated* self and the unreconciled duality of substance and subject. It is "the philosophy of the new period" that "proceeds from the principle at which the ancients had arrived, the standpoint of actual self-consciousness". The new philosophy, which began with the question what is the "truth as truth" (TW 20, 65) and with the restoration of "thought as the principle" (TW 20, 123) is developed by Hegel up to Schelling quite clearly with a view to avoiding distortion of his own philosophy. The result of the philosophy of the ancients, who proceeded from the objects, was (as in the Neoplatonists) the complete intellectualisation of everything that is, the notion of the "ideality as such in all reality" (TW 20, 457). Recent philosophy, in contrast, began with "thinking self-consciousness", which it initially found standing in opposition to the external world; its "labour" was "to lead this beyond back to actuality and into self-consciousness" (TW 20, 458). This required the concept of "*infinite form*", which included the "critique of thinking" as well as the "instinct for the concrete" (ibid.)—in Hegel's account this was the achievement of Fichte. Schelling then formulated the principal unity of the last opposition, of subjective and objective as such (cf. TW 20, 460), if not in the clear knowledge that this involves the absolutely negative relation of the spirit, no longer mediated by any medium term, the absolutely negative relation of living totality. Spirit is what is simply relating as such, which thus even responds to the highest opposition too as relating. It is not something that is added to the other things, to other "entities", but that

which divides itself in all determination of anything into *this given* determination, thereby enabling the something in question both to be and to be known. Hegel's philosophy is the attempt to enter into this spirit, this power of relating, which is never something external to us, from the inside. The history of the *one* philosophy, which as a history of relating is a necessary course of the spirit, results in a power of relating of the spirit that has become conscious of itself and which is there *for us* and not only in itself. The pinnacle of this result is the knowledge of the "convertibility" of content and form, substance and subject, life and cognition, the knowledge that it is philosophy in which, as it were, the eyes are opened for the "course of the world", but also in the knowledge that the point of this course of the world is precisely nothing other than this knowing and opened eye. In the last sentence of the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel speaks of the "eternal idea existing in and for itself", which "eternally activates, generates and enjoys itself as absolute spirit". Activation, self-generation and self-enjoyment are the activities of revelation, of what is continuously manifest itself, which here is not a utopian goal of philosophy, but has become its own genuine element. No-one would claim that landing in this element solves all the problems of philosophy for all time. Neither, on the other hand, should anyone suggest that the problems of philosophy can be posed, let alone solved, outside of this element. It is the opened eye that first constitutes them as well as solving them; it is that clarity, which not only exists as such, but which we ourselves should also be, that is the element in which philosophy's clarification is conducted. If Hegel tied his own thought to his time, he left this point out of that, for it refers to the "originality of the spirit", of which we have already spoken. Witness to this originality, his thought is in no sense out-of-date—and certainly not finally in an era that in so many ways, philosophically too, lives on borrowed time.

### 3 Afterword on Dialectic and Epilogue

In the *Introduction* we spoke of the method of Hegel's philosophy, the dialectic, as one leading to totality or its induction, while stressing that totality is not to be thought of as a finished result, a given whole.<sup>10</sup> This procedure begins by focussing on the *mediation as such*, not on the mediated terms. Totality as beginning and end points of its movement is indispensable to philosophy and this is one of the principles Hegel defended from his first emergence as a philosopher; conversely the first representatives of this totality in Hegel's

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. pp. 37–41 above.

thought—religion, life, and love—exhibited a dialectical profile right from the start. The dialectical method fulfills the need to find a perspective on totality and to think in orientation to it while acknowledging the impossibility of grasping it in sharply determining speech; philosophy dialectically determines itself essentially to embrace circumlocution, which on the way to totality is more precise than all supposedly cut and dried formulas. Kant's proof that totality cannot be a possible subject of finite predication is not revoked by Hegel; on the contrary, Hegel relies directly upon the potential of Kant's antinomies of reason for his critique of the categories (cf. GW XXI, 180; Miller 190 f.). However, he regards the dialectic not like Kant as an organic defect or a defect of thought, but rather as the first pointer to a "language of totality", indeed, of a revolution in language in which ultimately totality itself finds its own language, not in the sense of a "meaning" abstractly corresponding to a language, but such that speech, the self-continuation of language itself throughout the real differences, is itself the presentiment of the whole and the logical responsibility of transparency. Dialectical consciousness is in this sense never the consciousness of specific 'moves' perpetuating a given 'discourse'. An 'operationalised' or even 'formalised' dialectic, as we said at the start, has never achieved dialectical competence in the sense of the presence of the mediating logos.<sup>11</sup>

This certainly does not mean that dialectic is just another name for caprice. Relying upon the references in the *Introduction* as well as on Hegel's dialectical practice we have gotten to know throughout the book, we would here like to make this clear once again in relation to certain central aspects of dialectical thought, although there is no question that a substantial account of fundamentals of the dialectic as the "really valuable part of philosophy" as Plotinus once put it, requires a study of its own.<sup>12</sup>

To repeat an important observation one last time, Kant drew very different consequences from the demonstration of the antinomies of reason than Hegel did. Kant was sceptical of the capacity of thought for totality and insisted that concepts of totality can never be realised. I, world and God remain *materialiter* unutterable and form only formal coordinates of the field within which knowledge with content (for Kant the knowledge gained through experience) is at all possible. The conclusion Kant draws from the antinomy is thus a reflexive clarification of the range of the understanding in terms of regulative principles of reason, which themselves, however, contain no knowledge. Hegel, on the other hand, sees in the antinomy an objective motion, a reflection not of subjectivity,

11 Cf. Hegel, *Ohlert-Rezension*—Ohlert review, TW 11, 480. "Dialectic is . . . not *inference* as an arbitrary making of consequences out of assumptions . . .".

12 Plotinus, *Enneads* 1, 3, 5.

but of the “object that lies beyond objectivity” which the antinomy refers to. Antinomy is, as Kant says, unavoidable; the motion that produces it is no “external” reflection that one may or may not perform. So it clearly reveals a “subject” within it which, despite the fact that it is immediately unutterable, we cannot escape. The fact that *thesis* and *antithesis* too for Kant *both* miss the whole they aim at does not mean that even this kind of knowledge constitutes a testimony to the whole, even if only an indirect one. Dialectic is indeed the sceptical opposition to the truth of thesis and antithesis; it is as such the opposition to a merely positive, ‘positional’ style of thinking. It does not remain stuck in this scepticism but aims to bring out what is affirmative within it. Since Plato dialectic is *anagoric*, ‘leading upwards’ as it aims to bring to language what has for too long been unspoken—precisely the totality.

Hegel made extensive use of this anagoric aspect of dialectical thinking in the *Phenomenology*. In contrast to the dialectic of the ancients, there Hegel developed a dialectic not only of objects, but of the conscious relation to objects, which, driven to their respective apories, saturate themselves on their initially alien essences by withstanding the difference (of the antinomy) and emerging from it. This movement into totality of consciousness in the certainty of clarity as such as its principle comes to rest in absolute knowing and, once again differing from the dialectic of the ancients, it is not a progress towards an *external* totality—not to Plato’s *good* nor to Plotinus’ *one*—but to the totalisation of the self, to the pure grounding in itself of knowing as the comprehensive horizon of reason. If the dialectic of the Neoplatonists all the way up to Nicholas of Cusa culminated in a *raptus mentis*, in the vision of God as an external absolute, then Hegel took the final step here. In Hegel’s philosophy even the difference between inside and outside, between above and below collapsed into the knowledge of the *absolute* totality, which no longer allows the assertion of these oppositions and replaces “objective” transcendence with absolute, completely incommensurable, true knowing. The point of concretion of I, world and God is the same individual unity of reflection-in-another that is also reflection-in-itself (cf. GW XI, 251). The goal of all philosophy is for Hegel the real self-knowing of totality finding itself in the individual. It is the clarity that reaches itself as its principle, that is no less ‘for me’ than it is ‘in itself’ and for that reason no longer makes this distinction; it is the condition of logic that is conscious of itself, the condition of the *third syllogism*. Dialectic as the penetration of the logic of relation as such is the knowledge of an initial *coherence as the root of all determination*, a coherence from which we are not excluded, but from which we are already always thinking—without thereby denying the severity of the difference, of the antagonism of what is differently determined by closing our eyes.

In the *Science of Logic* we encountered a concrete methodological moment of the dialectic that goes beyond its generally anagogic character. This is the moment of the self-application of the thematic category constituting simultaneously its fulfillment, its critique and its overcoming into a new categorial immediacy. There we saw how from out of the becoming of becoming as the negative, and as such suspended becoming, qualitative, determinate being emerged; it was the reflection of the reflection from which existence as well as external appearance emerged, just as it was the self-conceptualising of the concept from which the judgment emerged—to mention just a few examples. Here dialectic is the self-fulfillment of the concrete concept, being content to itself, its reflection-into-itself, which gives it at the same time an ‘extension’, an immediate reference, against which the concept as a totality is known. This is the sense in which Hegel develops self-relation as a generative ground of determinate relation to others, growing out of totalised or completely reflexive self-relation and it is a fundamental principle of Hegel’s category critique that the determinate category reflexively turned in on itself produces *its* other as a ground for new determination from out of itself. Dialectic here is the production of a negative relation that brings out of the relation itself what is immediately unrelated, the not yet comprehended concept of totality. It is, for example, the concept I, which as the process completed, i.e. as self knowing, indicates the (initially indeterminate) other I, just as it is the concept that has gone into itself, the concept transparent to itself that indicates the immediately opaque concept and with that the need for explanation of the concept by the concept, the need for the judgment and then for the syllogism. It is the discretion of every single category in which it also terminates and poses a new continuity problem. This corresponds precisely to Plato’s concept of a dividing (*dihairetic*) dialectic pointing the way through the dihaireses to absolute mediation. For Hegel this “absolute mediation”, as we have seen, is the absolute idea, the method or the self-consciousness of the self-continuing power of knowing as such. It is to this self-consciousness that every step has to justify itself, to which every construction of relation over the abyss to the unrelated must answer. Only with this consciousness can qualified freedom begin, for it is freedom in the life of difference, of interruption, but also of its own interruption of itself and its turning in on itself. If freedom is not to be a postulate, mere self-will, then only because it knows itself to be the power and the ‘inside’ of knowing. It is this inside that is destined not only to be called the truth of the outside, but actually to be that and once it has revealed this the dialectic comes to an end. Dialectic is the grammar that seeks to teach us really how to speak the language of freedom, a language of participation and of selfhood with whose actual sounding philosophy gradually comes to its ‘end’.

Arriving at freedom is the completion of the dialectical ontology that understood being as relating, not as position or as a something, and which in this way completes itself into the potential for relation and the actuality of relation that is freedom. Instances external to freedom—time, space, matter, etc.—appear to the common imagination as possessing more being than whatever relates to the I, to knowledge and to freedom. That does not make any sense at all in dialectical ontology, which, since Plato, but first properly in Hegel, understands being in the highest sense as the completion of saturation. Plato and Hegel see orders of being layered according to ‘ontological intensities’. The notion that the pinnacle of this order is not ‘being as such’, much less what is identically persistent, but the integrating reflexive relating of the relation in itself, free knowing itself, implies a revolution in the common standards of ontology and the understanding, which in its full extent cannot yet be considered common property. The knots of the world are not tied in milky ways, in materials and energies, but in the knowing that has come to itself, in the pinnacle of absolute negativity, which, against the claims of milky ways and rocks, is what is really incommensurable as well as what measures those things, as it is also the prerequisite of the absoluteness of the spirit. as Hegel said at the start of his work at the Berlin university:

Man cannot think too much . . . of the greatness and power of the spirit; the closed essence of the universe *has no power within it* that could offer resistance to the courage to know; it must open itself to knowledge and expose its riches and its depths to view and offer them up to enjoyment.<sup>13</sup>

Along with the ‘experimental’ aspects it always includes in its circumlocutory movements, dialectic certainly also has to rely on this ‘courage to know’ testing itself on a ‘universe’. This does not include the attempt to talk down or exclude what is not of the spirit, what is not fulfilled. But just as certainly it seeks to show that the claims of reason, which relate to the whole and to fulfilment, do not fail because of those things that are not of the spirit. If being means self-relating, then that which does not relate has neither the first nor the last word. Neither does dialectic claim for itself any ‘last words’. It certainly does, however, keep the space of what is autonomous, that of the spirit that repels itself to itself, always open. Dialectic and the system corresponding to it is the reference to a semantic presence that is not available beneath its level. Philosophy, as Hegel understood it, is nothing other than the process of

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<sup>13</sup> Hegel, *Berliner Antrittsrede*—Berlin inaugural address, *ibid.* p. 48. Cf. Dickey and Nisbet, p. 185.

proving this presence—here and now and in free movement beyond the here and now; in the midst of the contingencies and still originating in a horizon in which these two clarify themselves because that horizon has infinite precedence over them. Philosophy is lived knowing and that measured against its highest claim: against infinitely lived knowing itself.

There is no doubt that Hegel himself belongs among those “great men”, of whom he said that they “condemn their fellows . . . to explain” them (cf. TW II, 574). A propaedeutic to Hegel is not the place to go into the history of the interpretations and explanations that have been offered in his case, even if this history, including all the swings of the pendulum, is certainly worth studying. It has to be said, however, that as a whole Hegel interpretation has hardly attained the level of its subject. It would be quite easy, independent of all that, to write a history of philosophy since 1831 as a history of exclusions of Hegel’s insights into and challenges to philosophical thinking, starting with the exclusion of a non-objective beginning for philosophy through that of a dialectical category critique all the way to that of the logos itself as the total and concrete horizon of thinking, whose destiny it is to fulfil itself not first in some beyond, but within time itself. After Hegel, with and without explicit criticism of his standpoint, so much has become so much less ambitious—even to the point of outright philistinism. On such a path there was no other outcome, to take only these two examples, for logic than to end up as a computation problem and for the spirit to turn into the genie in the bottle of an externality imagined in ruthlessly naturalistic terms. Philosophy is then no longer the thorn in the flesh of the imagination and the understanding and instead cements their frameworks, sealing them against the intrusions of the originality of the spirit. Hegel rediscovered the logos on the grounds of modernity in its greatest extent; he also discovered it as something completely new, namely as the horizon of freedom. In its place clearly less ambitious organisation forms of knowledge have taken its place, which exhibit far less stamina and in fact amount to little more than waves of formalisation threatening to eliminate the real topic of philosophy in its full dimension—for Hegel the “*highest good* that man can possibly possess, *the self-consciousness of his essence*”<sup>14</sup>—from the day-to-day business of philosophy.

The impression philosophy makes as a result at the turn of the third millennium, where its name is heard at all, namely that it is being administered rather than really being pursued, is not always easy to dismiss. This makes Hegel’s philosophy all the more an alternative, indeed one of the great alternatives to a busy emptiness that is supposed to replace the real flight of the owl.

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14 Op. cit. p. 46; cf. Dickey and Nisbet p. 183.

If just this were known that would be something in itself; how much more could be achieved if this knowledge were taken up as a foundation for building anew upon it. Of course, no-one should underestimate the potential of the matter of philosophy itself. This matter is ultimately the guarantee of its own future, so we should not worry too much about it. Hegel's optimism in these matters can still be infectious. That too is a good reason for making the most of the riches contained in his work.

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